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Krypton-sized Dawn  
Of Justice reveal

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WARS**

Abrams on Rogue  
One and the future  
of the saga

**CALIFORNIA LOVE**

**WEST COAST  
AVENGER**

Marvel showrunners on  
Agent Carter Season 2



FANTASTIC BEASTS  
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THE

FILES

**REBORN**

Deadpool



Shannara  
Chronicles



X-Men: The  
Animated Series



- EXCLUSIVE REPORT FROM THE SET
- DUCHOVNY & ANDERSON SPEAK OUT
- CARTER: "MULDER MEETS WIKILEAKS"
- INSIDE THE NEW CONSPIRACY

**WELCOME TO  
THE APOCALYPSE**

First look at Archangel, Jubilee  
and the all-new original X-Men

**"I THOUGHT IT  
WAS INSANE"**

How Psycho 2 defied logic  
to become a surprise hit

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## GET EXCITED ABOUT X-MEN: APOCALYPSE

The Children of the Atom's big-screen outings have been getting more epic with every appearance, but *X-Men: Apocalypse* looks to be taking things even further by bringing the titular blue-skinned force of nature into the fray. The trailer gave us our first looks at the young versions of Cyclops, Jean Grey and Nightcrawler, as well as showing Horsemen Storm, Archangel, Psylocke and Magneto entering the fray. With Mystique and Quicksilver joining Professor X for the battle to end all battles – and if the poster is anything to go by – this'll be an *X-Men* movie like no other.



It may have been absent from our screens for a while now, but it feels like *The X-Files* has never really gone away.

One way or another, it has stayed close, either lingering in the public consciousness or remaining familiar via the many re-runs it has received. Thus, this feels more like a revisitation than the 'revival' it is being touted as. Either way, *The X-Files* is back, and we couldn't be happier.

Even better was the experience of being on set with David Duchovny, Gillian Anderson and creator Chris Carter for an exclusive look at the making of the show, the findings of which we document in this very issue. Getting to hang out with Mulder and Scully – it doesn't get any better than this!

And the best part? We're only scraping the surface of what is a fantastic first issue of 2016. Inside, Marvel past and present is put under the microscope as we look ahead to the upcoming *Deadpool* movie, and chat to the cast and creators of the classic *X-Men* animated series.

Plus, we get the lowdown on *Agent Carter* Season Two and *The Shannara Chronicles* from those in the know, and speak to the talent behind future hits *Pride & Prejudice & Zombies* and *The 5th Wave*. There's also the small matter of our Death Star-sized review of a little film called *Star Wars: The Force Awakens*. You may have heard of it.

The truth is here.

**Steve**  
**Steve Wright**  
**Deputy Editor**



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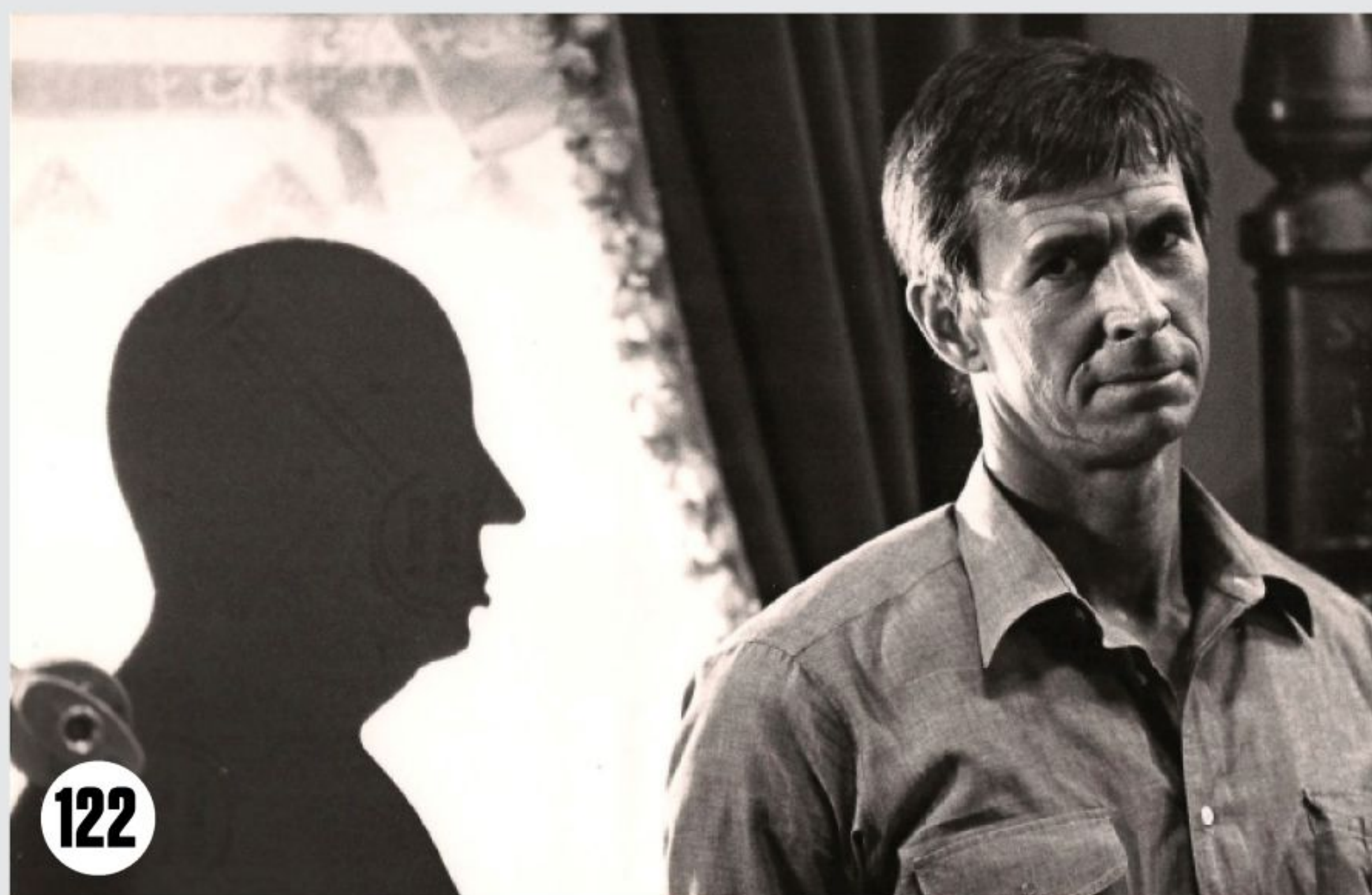
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# THE X-FILES



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## MEET THE TEAM

**Q.** Which genre TV series would you like to see revived?



**James Hoare**  
Editor in Chief

**A. Farscape**

The original irreverent space Western. Fire-who?



**Steve Wright**  
Deputy Editor

**A. Doomwatch**

Would be nice to see a modern-day update – as long as it's good.



**Jonathan Hatfull**  
Features Editor

**A. Pushing Daisies**

What happened to the Kickstarter rumours, Bryan? Yes, I know you're busy.



**Poppy-Jay Palmer**  
Senior Staff Writer

**A. Psychoville**

Maybe a prequel – I want to see David in his youth.



**Marcus Faint**  
Art Editor

**A. Utopia**

Beautiful to look at and fantastically written, a true Brit-classic.



**Jen Neal**  
Production Editor

**A. Firefly**

But only if they pretend the end of *Serenity* didn't happen.

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ON-SET EXCLUSIVE WITH DAVID DUCHOVNY,  
GILLIAN ANDERSON AND CHRIS CARTER



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# PORTAL

Your essential, trustworthy and unrivalled guide to the latest genre happenings

# 6

## FIRST IMPRESSIONS FROM THE STAR TREK BEYOND TRAILER

Excited for Star Trek? So are we. Now even more so... WORDS POPPY-JAY PALMER

**I**t's here. At last. With only seven months to go before its release, *Star Trek Beyond* finally put a trailer out. Seven months may seem like a long time, but in trailer terms it's just short of panic-inducing. Leave it six months until the release, and we're all like, "Where's the trailer? Is the film terrible? Is the film not going to be ready in time?" Thank Nimoy we didn't have to go through *that*. When it was slated to be shown in the cinemas before screenings of *Star Wars: The Force Awakens*, it started to make sense. With our minds at ease, here are six things we thought about the first *Star Trek* trailer...

**1 The Enterprise isn't in it that much**  
"Space: the final frontier. These are the voyages of the starship Enterprise. Except not really, because it's been blown up again." This seems like a pretty big spoiler if the film ends with the Enterprise's demise, so we're presuming it's out of order from the start. But what does that mean for the rest of the film? Does everyone just wander around jungles for two hours looking for spark plugs and spare warp drive parts? We can understand why some long-time fans would be slightly uneasy about the idea of

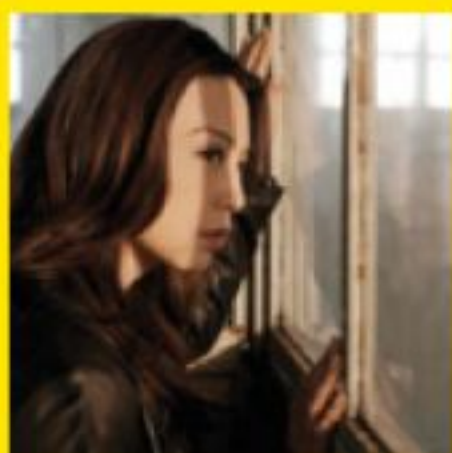


The trailer promised new adversaries this time round.

a non-Enterprise *Star Trek* film, but maybe this will give the film the opportunity to show off that '*Beyond*' element. After all, you don't need a spaceship to explore strange new worlds once you've crash-landed on one.

**2 It looks unbelievably fun**  
One-liners, motorcycle races, 'Sabotage' by the Beastie Boys – what more could you want? We're genuinely at a loss as to how some people could deny that *Star Trek Beyond* looks like buckets of fun already. To be fair, other people did recognise the fun-ness, but





The Agents Of SHIELD star talks to us about playing Agent May



Alfred himself Sean Pertwee on Season Two



The cast look fondly back at their memories of making Episode VII



We break down the epic full-length trailer for Batman V Superman

decided that isn't how *Star Trek* should be. A lot of them posted their disapproval in the YouTube comments section, which contains gems such as, "This is *Star Trek*? I have seen *Star Trek*, and this is not *Star Trek*"; "Nimoy is grave-rolling so fast it could start an earthquake"; "I almost guarantee if this weren't a labelled as a *Star Trek* film, everyone would be praising the trailer for 'looking fun'", and our personal favourite: "*Fast & Furious* in the space... [sic]". Ah, YouTube is the best.

### 3 McCoy is on top form

If there's something that doesn't sit right with *Star Trek* and *Star Trek Into Darkness*, it's that there's not nearly enough sassy Karl Urban to go around. Whenever things get a bit too serious for our liking, we can always count on Leonard McCoy to come in with an excellent one-liner to break the tension. In just a minute and a half of new footage, *Star Trek Beyond* has already proven just how valuable a player McCoy is to the franchise. Zachary Quinto has also previously revealed that McCoy's going to start hanging around with Spock more often than usual. We look forward to the hilarity that will surely ensue in that

situation. Here's to you McCoy, and here's to your long and prosperous life.

### 4 There's an awful lot of Scotty

The trailer opens with a familiar face: Scotty (Simon Pegg) pops his head around the corner of the Bridge and peers inside. "Is that music?" he asks Kirk. They establish that it is, in fact, music. "Well played," he says. Then he stays on screen for almost the entirety of the trailer. Does this mean we're going to be seeing a lot more Scotty in *Star Trek Beyond*? Pegg co-wrote the script, so it makes sense. With that power, Pegg could make anything happen. He could promote himself to captain. He could get off with any Enterprise crewmember he wanted. He could finally get out of that red shirt.

### 5 Where is Idris Elba?

Where is here? Where the gosh-darn-diddly is he hiding? Give him to us now. After many thorough and delicate examinations of the *Star Trek Beyond* trailer, we are forced to conclude that Idris Elba simply isn't in it. Maybe they're saving him for the next one. It's either that or he's disguised in extremely heavy alien make-up, but surely that can't

“ WHY WOULD ANYONE EVER CAST IDRIS ELBA IN THEIR FILM AND THEN COVER UP HIS FACE IN SCALES AND HORNS? ”



It looks like we'll see a lot more McCoy (Karl Urban) this time.

be right. Why would anyone ever cast Idris Elba in their film and then cover up his face in scales and horns? It doesn't make sense. It's hurtful, even. What about all the Elbarians out there, huh? What about us?

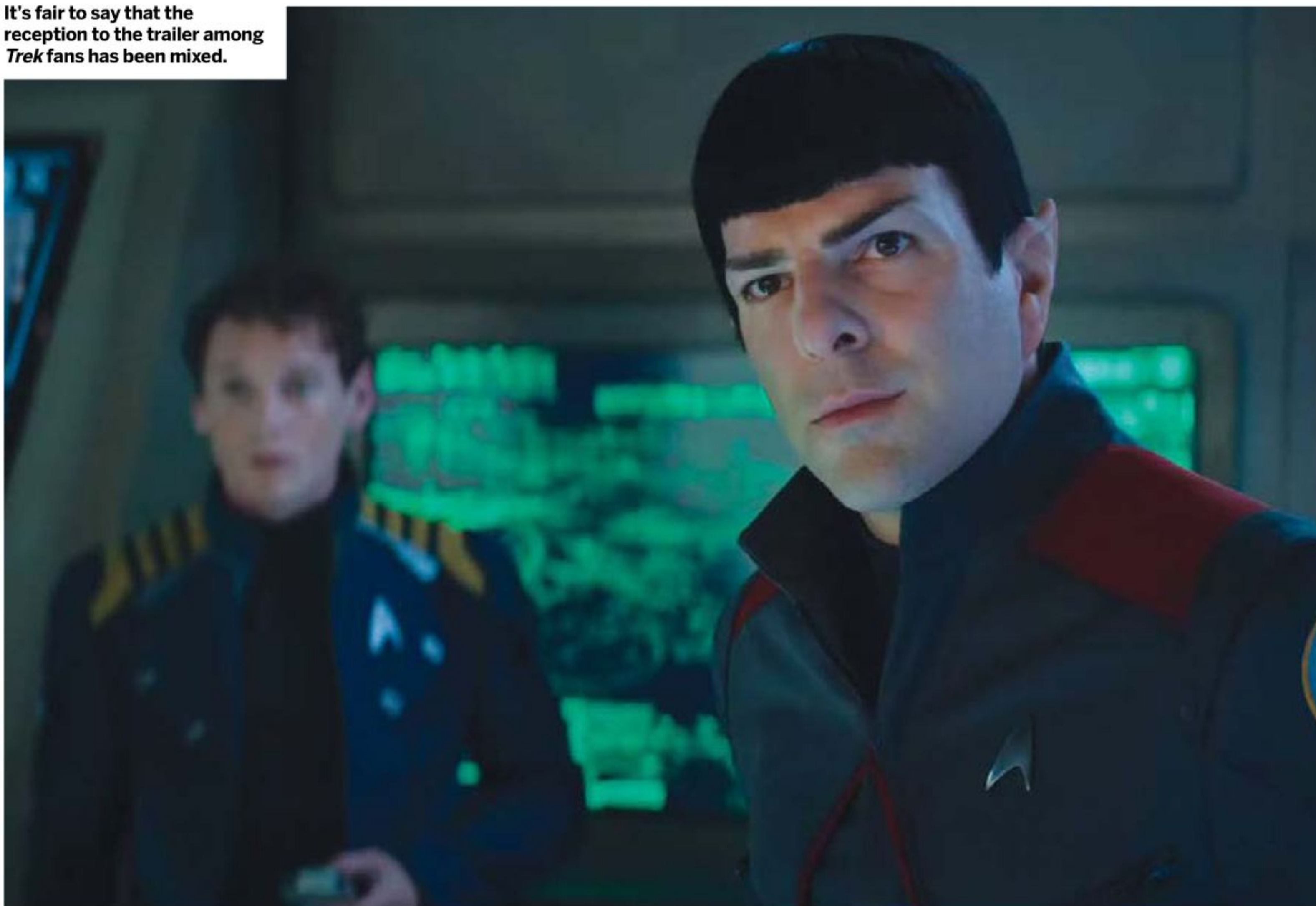
### 6 Who is this strange, interesting alien lady?

Somewhere under that alien make-up is *Never Let Me Go* actress Lydia Wilson, but who is she playing? We don't think her species has popped up in any kind of *Star Trek* before, but she seems to take centre stage for a lot of the trailer. While Spock is off partaking in buddy road-trip activities with McCoy, could Kirk be off doing Captain things with Lydia Wilson's character, whoever she is? Could she become as integral to the fabric of *Star Trek* as the rest of them? Time will tell.

*Star Trek Beyond* will be released in cinemas on 22 July.



It's fair to say that the reception to the trailer among *Trek* fans has been mixed.



Hopefully *Star Trek Beyond* won't leave the franchise in pieces.







# MING-NA WEN

**82**  
TOTAL GEEK  
RATING

## GEEK CRED

Besides *Agents Of SHIELD*, Ming-Na Wen's credits include *Stargate Universe* and *Eureka*. She's such a geek that it can be frustrating when people don't see it. "The first two years was a constant struggle to get into Melinda's skin and understand someone who is so detached from her feelings. She's fascinating, but I'm dying to play someone who's going to cry... or laugh. What if May and Simmons switched characters and we do a whole *Freaky Friday* thing?"

18/20

## GEEK LIFE

She often describes herself as a geek girl. When pressed for examples, she immediately blurts out, "Every time I see a little news item about *Star Wars*, I get super excited. I've also been going to more of these Comic-Cons, so I meet these iconic figures that I grew up with. Recently, I met William Shatner. That was just the coolest thing in the world." On a more domestic level, she notes, "There is nothing better than seeing a movie on the big screen with an audience."

17/20

## FAN POWER

"I go to the cons, and these fans are so excited to see me. It's lovely, especially when it's young girls. That's what's so great about our show, it just spans such a wide range of people. There was this one older gentleman who said, 'I'm so sorry, I know I'm probably too old, but I just love your show. I love your character. Big fan. Thank you so much for entertaining me all those hours.' I was, like, 'No please, that's so cool. Thank you.' That kind of thing just blows my mind."

16/20

## COMMITMENT

If you're a fan of *SHIELD*, you've no doubt noticed the intensity of the fight scenes. Ming wants them to feel as real as possible. "They're very strong stuff; really brutal. That's what I love about Marvel: the equality between men and women. You'd think that it would be gruesome to see a man beating up a woman, or the woman fighting back, and it's not. It's a rare thing to have a show where the dynamic is not something that makes people cringe. They get excited about it."

16/20

## THE FUTURE

"I would love to see May be more vulnerable and be able to have a relationship with someone again, and be able to fulfil that part of her life. We were doing some scenes yesterday, and I'm always trying to throw a little bit of Ming into it. Like, 'Couldn't she say this little funny line?' and they're like, 'Uh-uh. No. No you can't.' The note I always get is, 'Less Ming, more May.' Maybe by Season Five she'll be able to soften up a bit, but still be able to kick Ward's ass."

15/20





# PRISON BREAK

Actor Sean Pertwee tells us what Arkham Asylum has to offer in Gotham Season Two...

WORDS POPPY-JAY PALMER

If you thought the state of Gotham City in Season One was bad, Season Two is about to get even worse. The series' subtitle, 'Rise Of The Villains', says it all. The first season was about setting the scene and establishing the characters. The second is about messing it all up.

"When [everything] collapsed at the end of Season One, chaos begins to reign in the shape of Theo Galavan (James Frain), who arrives with his half-sister Tabitha (Jessica Lucas)," says Sean Pertwee, who plays butler Alfred Pennyworth on the show.

"They bust out of Arkham Asylum with all the worst criminals that ever

graced Gotham City. It's basically the dissembling of a city into utter chaos. You'll meet people like Jerome, who may or may not be the Joker. You'll meet Freeze. You'll meet Hugo Strange. You'll start to meet some of the legendary characters, but in their fledging stages of course, because the show is called *Gotham* after all, and it's about how the city moulds people into becoming these extraordinary characters that we know later in their lives."

Of the new players, Pertwee reckons Cameron Monaghan, who plays Jerome, could be the breakout of the season. "It was a seminal performance, as are a lot of them," he tells us. "You'll see that the difference between the first season and the second season is the story arcs are bigger. You'll start to see weird couplings. You'll start to see relationships form that you never would have expected.

"I think the fans will be very pleased. It's really taken off in America. I mean, we're very proud of Season One, but with Season Two, it's our world now, and you can see a real marked change in confidence and everything else."

*Gotham* Season Two is currently airing on Mondays at 10pm on Channel 5.



Sean Pertwee is back as Alfred in Season Two of *Gotham*.

# HERE BE MONSTERS

How *Beowulf* will bring the epic back to ITV

WORDS JONATHAN HATFULL

The last time we saw *Beowulf*, the legendary monster slayer was fronting a \$150 million movie and wore the animated face (if not body) of Ray Winstone. If you're wondering how an ITV drama could hope to do justice to the character and the myth then you haven't counted on the ambition on display here.

"My assistant reminded me of a Stanley Kubrick quote, 'Directing a film's a bit like trying to write *War And Peace* while driving a bumper car in an amusement park,' and I thought that was kind of apt for creating a TV series," executive producer Katie Newman laughs. "I think *Beowulf* is like trying to write *War And Peace* while driving a bumper car in an amusement park in 90mph winds. This is one of ITV's biggest ever shows; it was incredibly ambitious."

The result is certainly impressive and hugely ambitious, an epic adaptation of the legend with CGI from the talents behind *Walking With Dinosaurs*. Rather than present us with another straight adaptation of the story, however, writer James Dormer tells us that he was determined to find a new spin on it. "The version of the poem that we have was brought here by Scandinavian

immigrants. They were trying to find out who they were, figuring out their identity and find their way to being British," he explains.

"One way of doing that was slightly extracting it from the specific Scandinavian setting and taking it into a mythical *Lord Of The Rings*-type fantasy world where we could have not just Vikings, but anyone that we wanted, we could have stronger women and stuff, and it just seemed like a really exciting way to go."

"I don't think on British television we've seen anything like this before," says *Downton Abbey* star Ed Speellers, who plays *Beowulf*'s rival, Slean. "It has matched the ambition I was sold on."

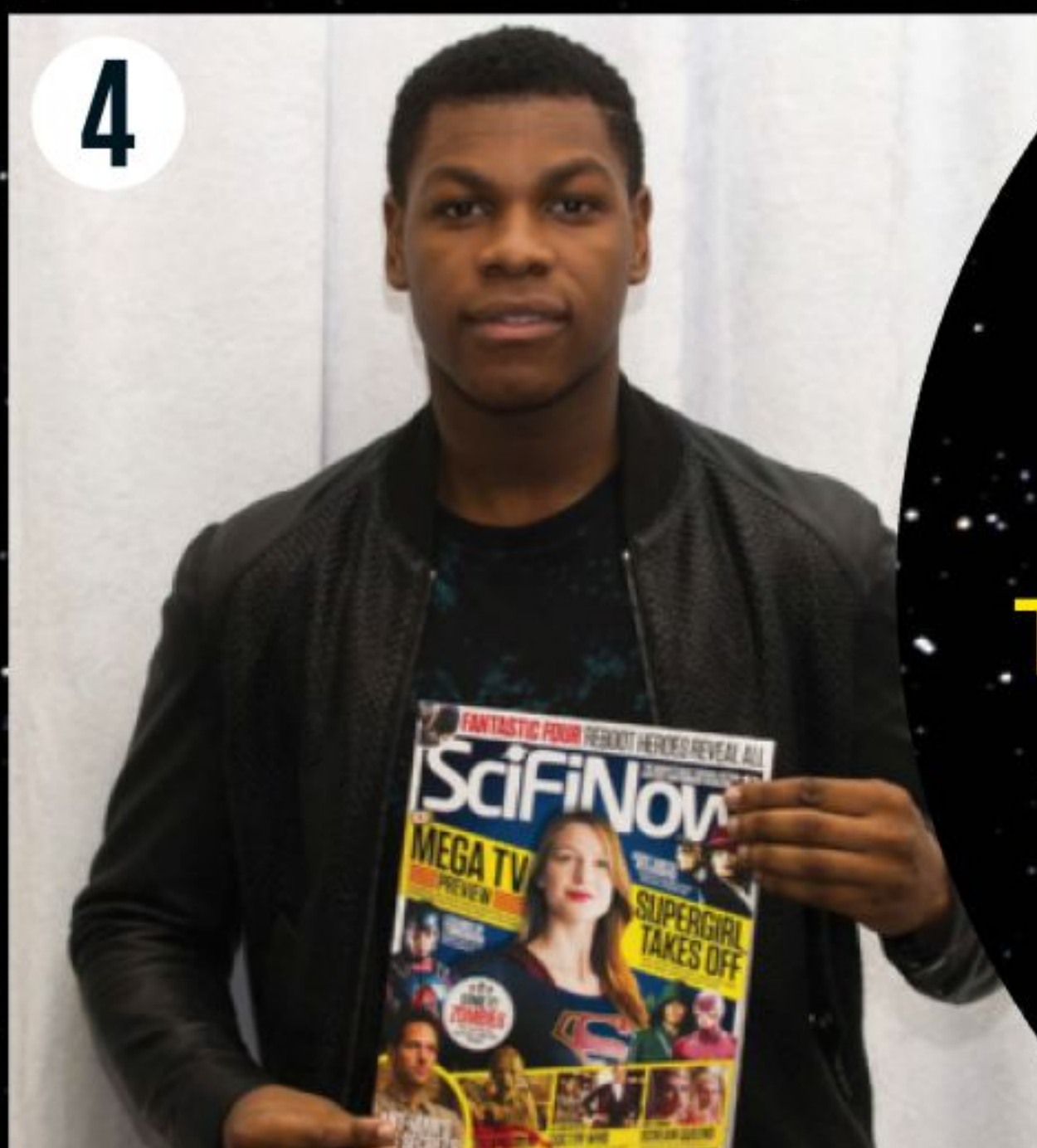
*Beowulf: Return To The Shieldlands* is airing now on ITV.



ITV is going Norse in *Beowulf: Return To The Shieldlands*.







# STAR WARS

## MEETS SCIFINOW!

The cast of *The Force Awakens* look back on the movie

INTERVIEWS ADAM TANSWELL PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE HFPA

Ahead of the Los Angeles premiere, SciFiNow caught up with the cast of *Star Wars: The Force Awakens* for an epic photo opportunity... *Star Wars: The Force Awakens* is in cinemas now.



1

**HARRISON FORD**  
"What's the difference between flying the Millennium Falcon and a plane? The Millennium Falcon never breaks, and you can put it down anywhere. The airplane that I put down on that golf course disappointed me, but the Falcon is infallible."

2

**CARRIE FISHER**  
"I have a new hairstyle in the movie, but it reminds me of a baboon's ass. You'll still recognise me, though. I look melted and I look my age. Unfortunately, I don't want to look my age. I would do everything but have serious surgery to not look my age."

3

**DAISY RIDLEY**  
"My favourite *Star Wars* film is *Return Of The Jedi* and my favourite character is Yoda because he's so funny. I love *Episode VI* the most because of the Ewoks. There's such a wonderful contrast between Luke saying farewell to his father and there being an Ewok disco in the background!"

4

**JOHN BOYEGA**  
"I feel like Finn and Han's relationship mirrors mine and Harrison's. Basically, we are best friends. Harrison wouldn't say that, but we are. We are close. Finn doesn't have as much respect for this legacy as everybody else does, and I think Han finds that charming."

5

**LUPITA NYONG'O**  
"A few days into the filming of *The Force Awakens*, I looked around and my mind exploded. The art direction in this film is incredible because every texture in it feels otherworldly. I definitely had a moment of, 'Oh my God... This is real. This is really happening!'"

6

**GWENDOLINE CHRISTIE**  
"The first time I was introduced to Harrison Ford, I couldn't speak. I had absolutely nothing of any interest to say. I just made noises, looked at the floor and I was then taken away, which was the best move for everyone. I was quite overwhelmed by that meeting."

7

**OSCAR ISAAC**  
"There is some really weird *Star Wars* merchandise out there, including a beach chair with my face on the seat. People can actually sit on my face! Why not put my face on the back of the chair? I haven't gotten a lot of luck with this merchandising so far."

8

**ADAM DRIVER**  
"When I was a kid, my dad had a stormtrooper helmet that he would put on and chase us around the house. He also had models of the Millennium Falcon, so *Star Wars* was always around me. I don't remember [when] I first [watched it]. It's always been in my DNA."



# FIVE THINGS WITH FALK HENTSCHEL

## Hawkman on what to expect from *Legends Of Tomorrow*

WORDS STEVE WRIGHT

### 1 Bad romance

Our first glimpse of The CW's take on Hawkman was in *The Flash* and *Arrow*'s crossover episodes, in which he catches up with his long-lost love Kendra Saunders, aka Hawkgirl (Ciara Renée). Naturally, the course of true love doesn't run smoothly. "They are like a bickering old couple," says Hentschel. "He is convinced that she will fall in love with him, because that's what she's done the last 200 times... it's a fun dynamic of trying to win her over and explain to her who she is."

### 2 Days of future past

A regular member of the Justice League in the comics, and the subject of numerous on-screen interpretations, Hentschel wasn't exactly short of inspiration to draw on. "The core of the character that had me most excited was his back story of the reincarnation; the fact that he has seen all of civilisation grow up. I thought that was really interesting, and also his attitude to it all: how are you when you've been alive for 4,000 years? Are you relaxed about it, or frustrated?"

### 3 The tomorrow people

Next time we see Hawkman, he will be part of an ensemble cast in *Legends Of Tomorrow*. Working alongside the likes of Brandon Routh, Arthur Darvill, Caity Lotz and Wentworth Miller, it's an experience that he definitely enjoyed. "It's a lovely cast. The challenge of it is you have nine people in many scenes where you're just like, 'Wow, there's a lot of us, there's a lot of shooting that we have to cover,' and it was just a really exciting roller coaster ride to get it all done."

### 4 Playing well with others

One of the most interesting facets of *Legends Of Tomorrow* is its choice of team members, mixing the likes of Atom and Firestorm with villains Captain Cold and Heat Wave. While Hawkman has been more of a lone wolf in the past, Hentschel hints that it won't be the case this time. "He plays along. They unite for a greater cause... there are a couple of things going on that we haven't fully explored yet... He's a lone wolf, but at the same time he's probably fought alongside Alexander the Great. He's used to being the boss."

### 5 Legends in the making

*Legends Of Tomorrow* is an ambitious undertaking, uniting various oddball supporting cast members of its sister shows. Despite this, Hentschel is confident that fans will enjoy it. "It's going to be so action-packed, and getting to see these eight very different superheroes with very different powers come to life. I think it's going to be a spectacle, and that hasn't quite been done on TV before."

*Legends Of Tomorrow* will air shortly on Sky 1.



Teaming up with The Flash and Hawkgirl in *Arrow*.



# STAR WARS AND THE FUTURE OF CINEMA

## JJ Abrams and Kathleen Kennedy on *Rogue One* and beyond...

WORDS ADAM TANSWELL

**W**ith *Star Wars: The Force Awakens* continuing to captivate audiences around the globe, JJ Abrams and Kathleen Kennedy have been praised for successfully recreating the visual aesthetic of the original *Star Wars* trilogy by shooting the *Episode VII* on film and using a host of practical effects, as well as real locations and tangible props. Sure, *The Phantom Menace* was also recorded on film, but its reliance on 'shiny new CGI' has to shoulder some of the blame for many fans' dismay with the prequels. But what does the future hold? Is the end of the use of 35mm in sight? We asked the two movie-making icons for their thoughts on the subject.

Speaking to SciFiNow in Los Angeles, Kennedy admits: "There are many filmmakers who are trying to protect the use of celluloid and keep film very active. But I think the sad reality is, it's becoming increasingly difficult to develop film and to make prints, and to have theatres that can continue to show film. There's no question that the digital age is having a huge footprint on our business."

Abrams is far more passionate about the prospect of the demise of 35mm and old-school filming techniques: "I don't care what



statistics say, or what the scopes read; I don't care what any of the numbers say when you are analysing the dynamic range of digital." The director pauses before adding, "I don't care what Kathy says! I am sure we have all seen beautiful digital photography and we have all seen hideous film photography – but the truth is that film is God. Film is the ultimate means of capturing an image. I know that we are in an age of data and statistics, and quantifying things technically, but there's a magic to film that is real and to lose that as the standard would be a tragedy. I think it's an important thing that film remain the standard by which all means of capture."

Speaking of his adoption of more traditional filming methods and the practical effects used during the shoot of the recently released *Star Wars* adventure, Abrams continues: "The goal for us in making *The Force Awakens* was to move in two directions at once, which was to go forward and tell a new story, but also go backwards to a place and a

feeling that we all had when we first saw *Star Wars*. The embracing of old technology was extraordinarily exciting to us, and it allowed us to move further forward than I ever thought we could, because that old technology has advanced. And it's not just CGI that has advanced; puppetry has advanced, too. We were really lucky to be able to use any resource necessary to help us tell the story. Part of that involved using completely old-school, primitive puppeteering, as well as technology that was brand new in puppetry with servos, motors and remote controls."

After receiving huge praise for their use of film and old-school practices in *The Force Awakens*, Kennedy confirms an interesting – and perhaps controversial – choice for the upcoming *Star Wars* spin-off, *Rogue One*. There have been reports that 35mm will be used for certain sequences, but it appears that the majority of the movie will be shot digitally. "Lucasfilm will continue to do both film and digital," Kennedy explains. "We are shooting *Rogue One*







right now, which is a digital movie, but we pulled all the original Panavision lenses that were used for *Ben Hur*, and we are using those lenses on Arri cameras to create the look of the film."

Hardcore 35mm film fans needn't panic, though. The 2018 instalment of the stellar space adventure will not be shot digitally. Kennedy confirms: "In *Episode VIII*, we will go back and do it entirely on film, as we did on *VII*."

Moving forward, we asked the president of Lucasfilm for her thoughts on how cinema could look in 20 years time: "I think that's such an interesting

question. [Walt Disney Chairman] Bob Iger posed this to ILM, Lucasfilm and our ILMxLAB team; to try and begin to have conversations about what that futuristic cinematic experience is going to be. We are hearing about all these new technologies, whether it's virtual reality or augmented reality, or variations of them, that are going to be an extension of the experience that we have in theatres. We are hearing about where that is all going and what the capabilities are for projection,

too. We did a release of *The Force Awakens* in Dolby Dynamic Range, which was really fascinating. It's fantastic technology that allows you to actually see an image in a way that comes closer to what the eye actually sees. In answer to your question, what will cinema be like in 20 years? I don't know, but it's going to be fantastic."

Despite impressive advances with

in-home viewing, Abrams argues that the future of movies lies in a social cinematic experience. "[I think] there's nothing more exciting than being in a movie theatre with hundreds of

other people, all laughing together, shrieking together and applauding together – or booing together. I think there's something not just profoundly powerful, but also very human about the experience of watching a movie together in this way, especially in this day and age. I think we crave actual tangible community, and that is what movies do."

*Rogue One: A Star Wars Story* will be released in cinemas on 16 December.

**“ WE ARE SHOOTING ROGUE ONE RIGHT NOW, USING LENSES ON ARRI CAMERAS TO CREATE THE LOOK ”**

KATHLEEN KENNEDY



While minimal special effects were used on *The Force Awakens*, they were still spectacular.

## SCIFINOW DOES YouTube

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Keep calling back to SciFiNow magazine YouTube channel for new and exciting content you will find nowhere else.

The majority of *Rogue One* will be shot digitally.





Is this head-to-head  
really as simple as  
we first thought?



# CLASH OF THE TITANS

Breakin' down and freakin' out about the **Batman V Superman** trailer WORDS POPPY-JAY PALMER

**T**he latest *Batman V Superman: Dawn Of Justice* trailer really was something. However, we still haven't decided if it was something good or bad. Packed to the brim with angst, quips and special effects, we've scoured it for things you should be excited about. These are those things...



## 1 Let's start with a party!

Clark plays the nobody-writer while Bruce shows up in his fancy car. This is basically the start of *Notting Hill*.



## 2 Is this actually a rom-com?

"Who's that?" asks Clark. "You must be new," someone answers. This is how every rom-com begins.



## 3 The first meeting!

Bruce almost gives himself away when Clark asks for his position on the Bat vigilante. It's a bit awkward.



## 4 Above the law

Is this where it starts? Batman thinking he's above the law (even though Superman thinks the same).



## 5 "Bad history with freaks dressed like clowns"

This is *definitely* a Joker reference, but will Jared Leto make an appearance?



## 6 I'm Luthor, baby

Jesse Eisenberg's Lex Luthor seems either super fun or super annoying. We're not sure which yet.



## 7 Does Lex know?

"Good grip," says Lex. "You should *not* pick a fight with this person." Does Lex *know*? Or is the script just bad?



## 8 Zod is in the house

This confirms Bruce is pissed at Superman for destroying the Wayne Enterprises building in *Man Of Steel*.



## 9 "You're psychotic"

"That is a three-syllable word for any thought too big for little minds," says Lex. Lex is the worst.



## 10 What the F?

Why is Batman in the desert? Are those weird flying things the evil Darkseid's Parademons?



## 11 OMG, Bruce Wayne is Batman!?!

Superman has seen the man beneath the mask. Is his secret out?



## 12 What the Zod is happening?

Lex's assistant Mercy Graves waltzes in with a box with Zod's body in toe.



## 13 Doomsday is here

That's what he was planning. So this is actually *Batman V Superman V Doomsday*. Things will get messy.



## 14 WONDER WOMAN

All hope seems lost, but suddenly, Wonder Woman! Maybe she plays a bigger role than we thought.



## 15 Iconic bonding

Superman: "Is she with you?" Batman: "I thought she was with you." Aww, look at you two, finally bonding!



## 16 #SquadGoals

The new Golden Trio! You justice the hell out of that shit! They won't know what hit 'em! Bring on 25 March.



# WELCOME TO THE TRAILER PARK



We can't wait for Steven Spielberg's take on *The BFG*.

Eddie Redmayne stars in *Harry Potter* prequel *Fantastic Beasts*.



## The best of the best trailers for the best of the best movies... WORDS POPPY-JAY PALMER

**D**ecember was an amazing month for trailers. We ate up everything the studios threw at us and begged for more titbits once we were done. The biggest in the batch of trailers was easily *X-Men: Apocalypse*. Some lucky fans were given a peek at San Diego Comic-Con, but this was something entirely new. We got a first look at young Jean Grey, Nightcrawler

and Jubilee, but we also saw the true power of *Apocalypse*, and it was awesome. March can't come quick enough.

The first look at *Fantastic Beasts* turned most into an emotional mess. It didn't show much – a very basic plot was established when Newt Scamander let some magical creatures escape – but we were transported back to childhood with

the words: "Writer JK Rowling invites you to return to the Wizarding World."

*High-Rise* went down strangely at festivals, with some viewers leaving confused, and others falling in love with it. For us, the trailer is an instant 'yes, please'. It's fancy and creepy as hell, with a gorgeous classical soundtrack and Tom Hiddleston's velvety voiceover inviting us to join him in the *High-Rise*.

For lovers of Roald Dahl's book, or indeed the fantastic 1989 film, Disney and Spielberg's take on *The BFG* looks splendiferous. Just from the look of the trailer, we know it's going to be magical. The orphanage is gorgeous, the giant effects look exciting, and Ruby Barnhill couldn't have been more perfect as Sophie.

Last year's *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* wasn't great, but it made a lot of money so, of course, there's a sequel on the way. That's how these things work. The trailer looks pretty good though. It's fun, bright and colourful, and the introduction to live-action Bebop and Rocksteady was enough to put *TMNT 2* quite high up on the must-see list.

20 years seems to be the perfect amount of time between a sci-fi epic and its sequel, as demonstrated by the trailer for *Independence Day: Resurgence*, which looks epic in its own right already. Will Smith's Captain Hiller died in action during the gap, but Jeff Goldblum is still on top form, judging by his intense expressions of utter speechlessness.



The Heroes in a Half Shell are back for *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles: Out of the Shadows*.



After premiering at the BFI London Film Festival, we'll finally see *High-Rise*.

## Our expectations based on the trailers

### High-Rise

**Director:** Ben Wheatley

**Cast:** Tom Hiddleston, Jeremy Irons, Sienna Miller

**Released:** 18 March 2016

★★★★★

### X-Men: Apocalypse

**Director:** Bryan Singer

**Cast:** James McAvoy, Michael Fassbender, Jennifer Lawrence

**Released:** 19 May 2016

★★★★★

### Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles: Out of the Shadows

**Director:** Dave Green

**Cast:** Megan Fox, Stephen Amell, William Fichtner

**Released:** 3 June 2016

★★★★★

### Independence Day: Resurgence

**Director:** Roland Emmerich

**Cast:** Liam Hemsworth, Jeff Goldblum, Bill Pullman

**Released:** 24 June 2016

★★★★★

### The BFG

**Director:** Steven Spielberg

**Cast:** Mark Rylance, Ruby Barnhill, Bill Hader

**Released:** 22 July 2016

★★★★★

### Fantastic Beasts And Where To Find Them

**Director:** David Yates

**Cast:** Eddie Redmayne, Katherine Waterston, Ezra Miller

**Released:** 18 November 2016

★★★★★



# GRIMM HITS 100

## As the series celebrates a century of episodes, SciFiNow hears the secrets to its longevity from the cast and crew

WORDS MICHAEL SIMPSON

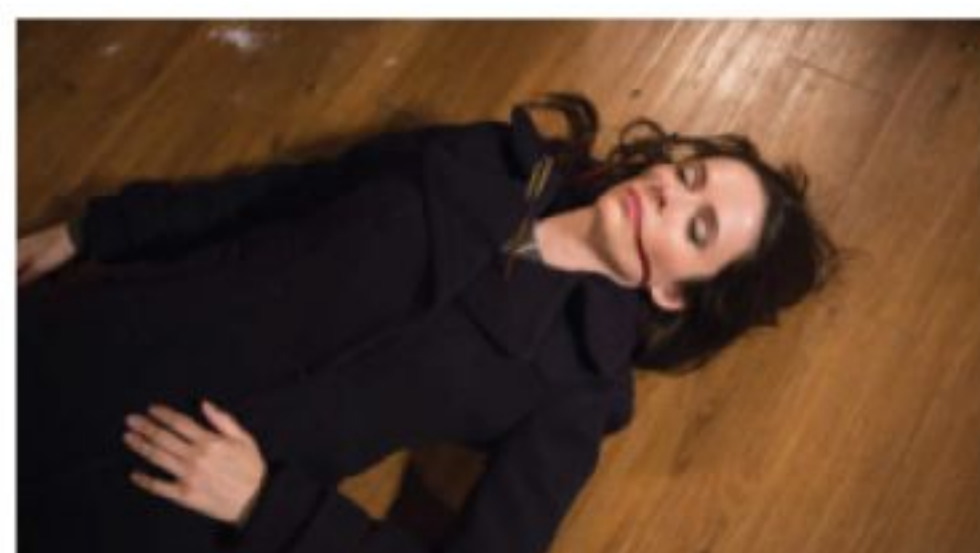
**C**onsidering that *Grimm* started out as a police procedural along the lines of *The X-Files* and *Supernatural*, its success says a lot about the talents of its cast and crew. No show survives long if the characters or writing are derivative, particularly if it can be compared to similar series that have set the standard for their sub-genre. That makes its record of being renewed for five seasons all the more impressive, especially since it will include its 100th episode.

"I feel a lot of gratification in many ways because in this new era of television... 100 episodes in broadcast network television doesn't come by too often," executive producer Norberto Barba tells *SciFiNow* at an event to celebrate episode 100. "It used to be the benchmark; 100 episodes meant syndication. These days you get syndication pretty quickly because everyone owns everybody else, but it still remains the benchmark where you say,

'You know what, that means you guys are doing good work'."

Part of *Grimm*'s success is down to Barba and his team knowing when to change things up. For example, the writers took the tough decision to kill off the character of Juliette, played by Bitsie Tulloch, at the end of Season Four. Moreover, in Season Five they've introduced new locations and a ruthless global adversary that detective Nick Burkhardt (David Giuntoli) and his friends must fight in Portland and further afield.

"A lot of shows when they get to Season Five feel they need to do a slight reboot to keep it fresh," Barba explains. "I think that going into Season Five there were certain discussions having to do with the mythology and the bigger world picture, because *Grimm* functions as a creature-of-the-week show, and within that there is a bigger storyline. So I think we had to say, 'Okay, where is this mythology going?'"



The killing of Juliette was the culmination of a tumultuous four years for the character, who was the love of Nick's life. In the show's first season she was ignorant of his ability to see Wesen – creatures from *Grimm's Fairy Tales* and other legends. Then, as the series progressed, her relationship with Nick forced her to meet them head-on, until she herself became a Hexenbiest and tried to kill her lover. This journey, perhaps more than that of any other character, parallels the evolution of the show.

"I think it has definitely got a lot darker, which is exciting because it feels more



No one is safe in the murky world of Wesen.

**HAPPY ANNIVERSARY!**  
THE BEST OF THE BEST FANTASY MILESTONE EPISODES...



**Supernatural's 200th Episode 10.05: Fan Fiction**  
The brothers come up against themselves, but in musical form. When a fan directs a show based on their lives, people start to disappear.



**The Vampire Diaries' 100th Episode 5.11: 500 Years Of Solitude**  
The show celebrated with flashbacks, guest stars and sadness as the characters reacted to Katherine's impending death.



Grimm's cast has been together from the beginning.



After 100 episodes, there's enough cake for everyone.



**“PEOPLE LOVE ROOTING FOR THE BAD GUY, ESPECIALLY IF HE LOOKS GOOD IN A SUIT. IT'S THE ANTIHEROES THAT DRAW US IN”**  
SASHA ROIZ

and more like we're honouring what the original *Grimm's Fairy Tales* were actually like,” says Tulloch. Even so, balancing out the horror with humour has also helped to secure *Grimm's* longevity, she adds. “You have to have some humour because that's what makes a successful show. I don't think we would have made it this far without a bit of both and a little romance and a couple of murders.”

The notion that fairy-tale monsters are among us requires suspension of disbelief, especially when you throw in that Nick and previous descendants of the Grimm family, are initially the only humans that can see them. Yet, *Grimm* gets away with this partly because its characters aren't

one-dimensional and most have a dark side that adds to their appeal.

“People love rooting for the bad guy, especially if he looks good in a suit,” suggests Sasha Roiz, who plays Nick's aristocratic Wesen boss, Captain Renard. “It's the antiheroes, the dark figures, that really draw us in.”

While some of *Grimm's* characters might not be trustworthy, however, the actors who play them say the cast has become a family. Working on the show for 100 episodes has also had other benefits, Roiz jokes. “I like to think we're all a little bit more attractive. I'm being facetious, but it's amazing – you come into your own in this process. You find your character, you hone it. Everyone knows exactly who these characters are, and you just get to it.”

The cast isn't taking it for granted that they will be around for another 100 episodes if *Grimm* continues that long. “There are certainly scripts where we pick them up and go, ‘Wait, wait, wait, where is this going?’ Then we breath a sigh of relief at the end,” says Roiz.

*Grimm* will air its 100th episode on Watch in March.

Mickey Fisher will get to give *Extant* a conclusion, with Halle Berry returning as Molly Woods.



## HUMANITY FACES A “FIGHT FOR SURVIVAL” IN EXTANT SEASON 2

Creator Mickey Fisher explains how a change of direction injects new energy into the Syfy show's second and final season

WORDS MICHAEL SIMPSON

It is rare these days for an American network to take a risk on a series that is as explicitly sci-fi as *Extant*. The principal character, Molly Woods (Halle Berry), is an astronaut who gets impregnated by extraterrestrial spores while orbiting Earth in a space station. What follows is a hybrid of family drama and conspiracy thriller set against the backdrop of a potential alien threat to Earth and musings about artificial intelligence.

Despite taking on some major speculative topics, *Extant* was commissioned by CBS from a script by first-timer Mickey Fisher and renewed for a second season despite its ratings. “As a guy who came out of nowhere, created a show, sold it straight to series with executive producer Steven Spielberg and Halle Berry, I feel like I've been hit by lightning three times,” says Fisher.

The cost of surviving for a second season was a scaling back of *Extant's* exploration of some of science fiction's big themes in favour of focusing more on the people involved, particularly Molly.

“[We] felt that we let the genre elements overtake the relationships and overshadow the characters a bit,” Fisher admits. “That's something we wanted to get back to in Season Two.”

*Extant's* second season also has more action and a reworked cast,

which gives it a different vibe. But, it's still the same show. “We talk about it as being a reboot, but we also talk about it as just being the next chapter of this story. Coming into Season Two, we wanted to infuse a new energy, a bit of new life, and to a certain extent there is a bit more of a pulp drive to it.”

One prominent new character is JD Richter, played by Jeffrey Dean Morgan (*Watchmen*). Richter is a grounded ‘everyman’, Fisher explains, and Morgan was the role model.

“We were sitting in the writers' room talking about the kind of guy he was and we said, ‘Well, he's kind of like Jeffrey Dean Morgan.’ So we just starting calling him JD for short.”

Joining Morgan is former *Walking Dead* star David Morrissey. His character, Tobias, is a military man, and in many ways the opposite of Richter, according to Fisher. “Richter is kind of an outsider; he's a bit of a rogue. David Morrissey's character is the ultimate insider. He's an old friend of Molly's, and believes he's got a mission to keep the planet safe.”

Unfortunately, we already know that *Extant* won't be back for a third season. Still, at least it has a chance to tie up all the loose ends.

*Extant* Season Two is airing now on Syfy UK.

**Angel's 100th episode 5.12: You're Welcome**

There's nothing special about the format of *Angel's* 100th episode, but after watching it you will never be the same. People die. Hearts are broken. You'll need a lot of tissues.



## HOT TOPICS

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## COSPLAY OF THE MONTH

Send your cosplay to @SciFiNow  
or Facebook.com/SciFiNow



### BLACK CANARY (ARROW)

COSPLAYER: SANNE DE BOER FROM: THE NETHERLANDS PHOTOGRAPHER: JAMES SHEPPARD

#### 1 THE CHARACTER

I'm cosplaying the Black Canary as portrayed by Katie Cassidy in *Arrow*. I personally prefer Sara's Canary (Caity Lotz) as a character, but Laurel's costume seemed more practical for a vigilante, and I used that as inspiration. I loved Sara's debut as the Canary in Season Two as a vigilante saving women walking home alone at night from assault and robbery. Her line, "No woman should ever suffer at the hands of men" sold her to me immediately. The fact that she's an athletic and acrobatic fighter, and survived a shipwreck and the

League of Assassins, made her even more badass.

#### 2 THE COSTUME

Despite having made costumes before, I would consider this my first 'proper' cosplay, and it's still not quite finished. I got almost everything from charity shops or eBay – eBay is my kryptonite. Rather than a wig, I opted for filling out my already blonde hair with extensions, and tried several corsets and waist trainers. I'm an avid runner, so to test out if my corset was vigilante-proof I took it out for a run and a gym

session. I didn't wear the lace suspenders though!

#### 3 THE DESIGN

As previously stated, I preferred Cassidy's costume and started from there. I had to appreciate her design in the DC comics and animated series, but couldn't imagine fighting off the League of Assassins in fishnet stockings! I wanted to portray a gritty, urban version of Black Canary as a woman without access to the kind of weapons or gear Oliver Queen's trust fund could provide. The daughter of a cop, she'd find

practical and economical ways to stay safe, using lifting gloves and (faux) leather, and choosing an elasticised bodice over a corset.

#### 4 THE ACCESSORIES

The metal staff is actually an old lifting bar – and it's pretty heavy! I tried doing some twirling with it, but it's definitely not a practical weapon, though I'm sure it packs a pretty mean punch. The mask was a last-minute find in a fancy-dress shop, and it's the one element of my costume I'm least satisfied with. I am considering that as my next DIY project!



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A promotional image for the X-Files miniseries. It features David Duchovny as Fox Mulder on the left and Gillian Anderson as Dana Scully on the right. They are both wearing dark suits and looking off-camera with serious expressions. The background is a dark, moody blue with some light flares. A bright light source is visible behind them, creating a halo effect. A green folder icon is overlaid on the image, containing text about the miniseries.

SCIFINOW GOES ON SET IN CANADA  
WITH DAVID DUCHOVNY, GILLIAN  
ANDERSON AND CHRIS CARTER TO  
GET THE INSIDE SCOOP ON THE NEW  
X-FILES MINISERIES...

WORDS ADAM TANSWELL

**THE TRUTH IS  
OUT THERE**







After talking about a return for years, Mulder and Scully are back.



## THE X-FILES' CREATOR CHRIS CARTER WANTS TO GET SOMETHING OFF HIS CHEST. IN THE CURRENT TV CLIMATE THAT'S HEAVILY POPULATED WITH REBOOTS AND

revivals – think *Twin Peaks*, *Heroes Reborn*, *Xena*, *Prison Break*, *The Muppets* and more – the head honcho hasn't taken his return to the successful supernatural series lightly. "If I came back thinking this [new series] was a reboot, I wouldn't be doing my job," he explains to SciFiNow. "It wouldn't be interesting to me to just come back and dust it off, so I think of the new show as *The X-Files* reborn. That's what I'm calling it. We are very mindful of where we've been in the past and where we are going now, but this isn't just a nostalgia trip, and it's not just a victory lap. This is something brand new and fresh."

The new miniseries, which launches in the US in early 2016 and rolls out around the world shortly afterwards, hasn't had an easy road to fruition. Prior to the new season, the show spanned an impressive nine series and 202 episodes, as well as two feature films, but the second big-screen effort, *The X-Files: I Want To Believe*, failed to score a significant audience, and Chris Carter's vision for a third movie was denied in 2008. However, the changing landscape of television has resulted in the US network reviving the sci-fi show, which will air on Channel 5 in the UK.

"This idea of the TV show only came to me about a year ago," admits Carter. "I got a call from 20th Century Fox because they had been talking to David Duchovny about it. The idea that we would come back to television 23 years after the show started was brand new to me, but I saw the beauty of it very quickly. Television has changed a lot in the last 20 years. When we left in 2002, reality TV dominated. A lot of the

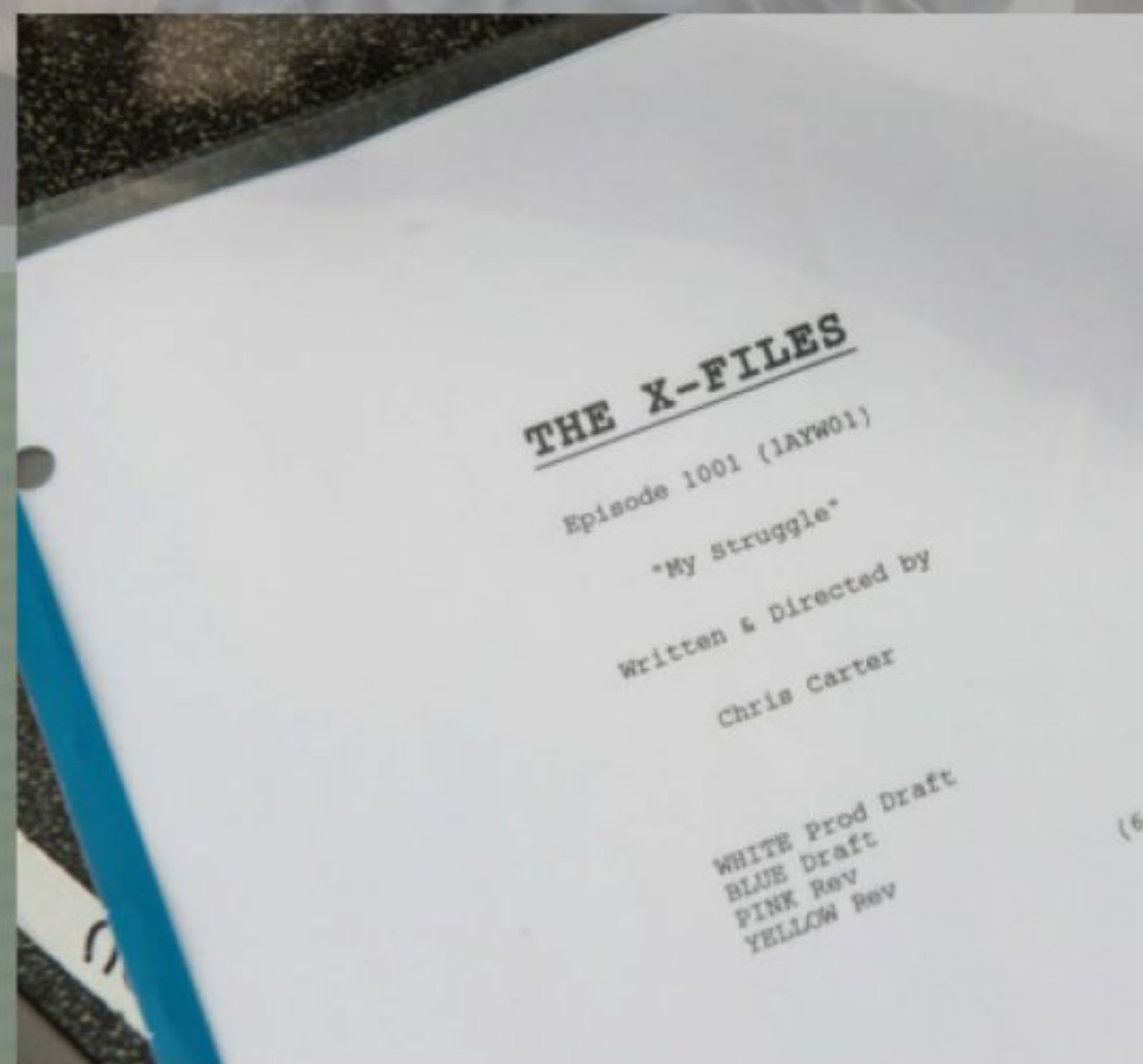
good hour timeslots were taken up by reality television, but there are many good dramas on now, and much of it is being driven by cable television, as well as streaming television. It's a different landscape. I think that telling *X-Files* stories in the period of history that we're in now is perfect timing."

Carter pauses to think before he continues. "Let me scroll back a little bit. In about 2001 or 2002, after the Twin Towers, we put all our faith in the government to protect us. We gave up rights and liberties, and we put our absolute faith and trust in the government to insulate us from a threat. In doing so, I think we've given up more than we bargained for, especially in terms of our privacy. In fact, the government has admitted that they are spying on us, so we're now living in a time where there is a sense that there are conspirators afoot. It's a perfect time in which to tell *X-Files* stories, which is much like we suggested in the Nineties, because there may be people working against your best interests."

Technology plays a key role in other key changes to the show's miniseries, which sees the return of Mulder and Scully, played by David Duchovny and Gillian Anderson. "We live in a media-saturated world now," adds Carter. "We live in a technologically different world to the one we lived in 23 years ago. Remember, when Mulder and Scully would talk to each other, they would do it with giant cell phones. Now, the cell phones are so small that we actually had to use slightly bigger versions so they didn't get lost in their hands. Simple things like that have changed. You have a camera on your computer now, so people could be looking at you through your computer, which is something brand new to our



Mulder and Scully's relationship is a little rocky when we find them.







➤ world. Plus, everything you write on your computer is not necessarily something that can be kept private – and that's something new, too. *The X-Files* grew up with the internet, but it had to. Now, we have to be mindful of what the internet has become, as well as the power of the internet and social media.”

However, one thing that remains constant with the series is the mythology. “The show had a big mythology when it first started, and that hasn't stopped,” agrees Carter. “The long-running storyline, which is all about government conspiracy, ran for nine seasons – and now we're looking at that in a new way. That's not just a result of the longevity of the show, but also because of the times we live in. I'm trying to be true to those times and true to the passage of time for Mulder and Scully and their relationship. Something's different, something's changed, and that's what makes it exciting for us to tell these stories.”

If you've never seen an episode of *The X-Files*, where have you been hiding? But if you've forgotten where we last saw Mulder and Scully, you're in luck. Carter has devised a way for new and old fans to understand what's going on in the miniseries without having to recap 202 episodes. When asked about attracting new audiences to the show, Carter explains: “That's a good question, and it's

something I had to be mindful of in doing this show. One of the best things for me is when a 20-year-old comes up and says, ‘Oh, I love *The X-Files*.’ I'll say to them, ‘But you weren't even born when *The X-Files* started.’ They'll explain that they saw it on Netflix or Hulu, and you realise that there are a lot of ways for young people to have found the show. It's not something that's been sitting around gathering dust; it's been out there. However, we had to be mindful of a new audience and a new viewer when we put that first episode on – and we didn't want to do it with a recap. I think that I've come up with a very clever way in which to not insult the fan and yet bring the new viewer into where we are on the show. And that is what will constitute the teaser of the first episode.”

The executive producer, creator, writer and director is chatting in a neat-but-compact conference room at North Shore Studios in Vancouver, where the cast and crew are currently finishing up the fifth episode of the six-episode miniseries. The only decoration adorning the wall is a poster of a UFO with the words ‘I WANT TO BELIEVE’ written underneath. “That's pretty apt, right?” jokes David Duchovny, pointing at the poster as he walks into the room for his interview. It's the same graphic that was seen on the wall of



Are you sure you want to close these cases?

YES

NO



## Open Cases

So many plots left unsolved, so few episodes to solve them in...

### 1 William

The dumping of Mulder and Scully's miracle baby was one of the most egregious examples of junking a storyline, as Scully gave up her telekinetic infant so he could have a normal life. Will they even address the fact that William existed?

### 2 What the hell happened to everyone?

So we know that pretty much everybody is back for this series. Although *I Want To Believe* already sneakily brought Skinner back, we demand to know how they survived. How did Skinner get out? Weren't a ton of rockets heading towards CSM?

### 3 Samantha Mulder

Technically ‘solved’, but who actually liked the explanation for Mulder finally giving up on the hunt for his sister? We would take most other explanations over the events of ‘Closure.’ Because that wasn't closure; that was nonsense.

### 4 The alien invasion

The reason why everyone was trying so hard to get *The X-Files* back on the big screen was because the show had taken the bold step of dating the alien invasion: 22 December 2012. Did they get here? Were the dates wrong? Will it be addressed?

Old enemies and allies are back, including Skinner (Mitch Pileggi).





Joel McHale joins the cast as an unlikely ally for the pair.

# THE X-FILES

The Truth Is Out There

One of the best things for me is when a 20-year-old comes up and says, 'Oh, I love The X-Files.' I'll say to them, 'But you weren't even born when The X-Files started'

Chris Carter



## A case of Mulder and Scully

Charting the painfully slow development of TV's best love story

Find a season, episode and more

♥ Feels out of 5

### Season 1, Episode 21 ♥

#### Tooms

As Mulder goes off to prove that Eugene Victor Tooms is framing him and is a dangerous killer, Scully pays him a visit and calls him Fox. "I even made my parents call me Mulder."

### Season 2, Episode 13 ♥

#### Irresistible

Mulder has just rescued Scully from the grasp of terrifying pervert Donnie Pfaster, but her collapse into his arms is one of the first instances of seeing that she trusts him.

### Season 3, Episode 17 ♥♥♥♥

#### Pusher

When Robert Patrick Modell forces Mulder into a game of Russian roulette, only Scully can bring him back. As they look down at the now-coma-bound lunatic, she takes his hand.

### Season 5, Episode 5 ♥♥♥♥♥

#### The Post-Modern Prometheus

Maybe the best episode Carter wrote ends with Mulder, Scully and Mutato at a Cher concert. Mutato dances with Cher, Mulder holds his hand out to Scully, and she accepts.

### Season 7, Episode 2 ♥♥♥♥♥

#### The Sixth Extinction II: Amor Fati

After being saved by Scully, he tells her "Even when the world was falling apart, you were my constant... my touchstone." "And you are mine," she replies, kissing him on the forehead.

### Season 7, Episode 4 ♥♥♥♥♥♥♥

#### Millennium

The first official Mulder and Scully kiss! As the New Year's clock ticks down, Mulder plants one on Agent Scully. "The world didn't end," he deadpans. Hearts all over the world sing.

### Season 7, Episode 17 ♥♥♥♥♥♥♥

#### All Things

It's not one of the series' best, but in terms of the relationship between the two, this is huge. She consciously chooses him and the two snuggle up on the sofa...

### Season 7, Episode 19 ♥♥♥♥♥♥♥

#### Hollywood AD

Once we knew that they were basically an official couple, *The X-Files* started giving us more of these charming moments, like them giggling at the premiere of the movie of their lives.

### Season 9, Episode 19 ♥♥♥♥♥♥♥

#### The Truth

The series finale is lovable if only for two moments of tenderness: the two kissing passionately with Mulder in jail, and the second cuddling on the motel room bed.

### The X-Files: I Want To Believe ♥♥♥♥♥♥♥

So the film wasn't exactly what we'd all been hoping for, but the revelation that they were living together was wonderful, as was the scene of Mulder tickling Scully with his beard. We've got mixed feelings about them being broken up now.



Somehow, the Cigarette Smoking Man has returned for more.





➤ Mulder's office for many years in the show.

"We'd always talked about continuing the show as a movie franchise," Duchovny admits when asked for his thoughts on his return to the sci-fi series. "I thought we'd come back every four or five years with another movie like *Bond* or *Star Trek*, but for whatever reasons, Fox didn't agree. I don't really understand why they didn't treat our franchise better as a movie franchise. The second movie didn't perform as well as the first one, but it wasn't a big enough movie to be put where it was. It was a \$30 million movie put out in summer. If you've got this homegrown franchise, do something amazing and spend the money on it to make it look like a summer blockbuster – but they didn't, and at that point I thought *The X-Files* was dead. But then the TV landscape changed because cable started having these limited runs, which was soon copied by Fox. None of us wanted to do 22 or 25 episodes a year again. I don't think I could've survived that, but we can do six or eight or ten. All of a sudden, we realised, 'Wow, why don't we start thinking about doing it on television again rather than bemoaning the fact that the second movie didn't do as well as we wanted it to. Let's re-conceive.'"

Speaking to the youthful-looking 55-year-old, it's tough to believe that Duchovny first started work as FBI agent Fox Mulder nearly 23 years ago, but it's a role that never left the acclaimed actor. "It felt pretty seamless to be Mulder again," he explains, shuffling in his director's chair. "Most of that's to do with having Gillian and Chris here. In many ways, Mulder never left me – as much as I would have wanted him to leave me. I think there was a point at which I was doing the show that I was afraid that it was going to be the only thing I was ever going to do, or that anybody was ever going to know me as. That was pretty troubling to me, but now I know it's just one of those once-in-a-lifetime roles that I'm completely grateful for."

"In a way, I never felt away from the show, because people were always talking about it," he continues. "There was never a time when people stopped talking about *The X-Files* – but that doesn't mean we weren't a little rusty when we started to shoot the reboot. On the first day of work, I had one of those horrendous monologues that Chris likes

to write. I had to say things like, 'Electro-gravitic propulsion.' And it was a little hard to click my brain into that frame of mind, but I discovered a long time ago that it doesn't matter what I'm saying, because what I'm saying is usually horseshit. I just have to say it really fast and act like I know what I'm talking about. There's a certain flow and rhythm that the guy has, so it took a moment to find that again – but other than that, it was all very, very familiar."

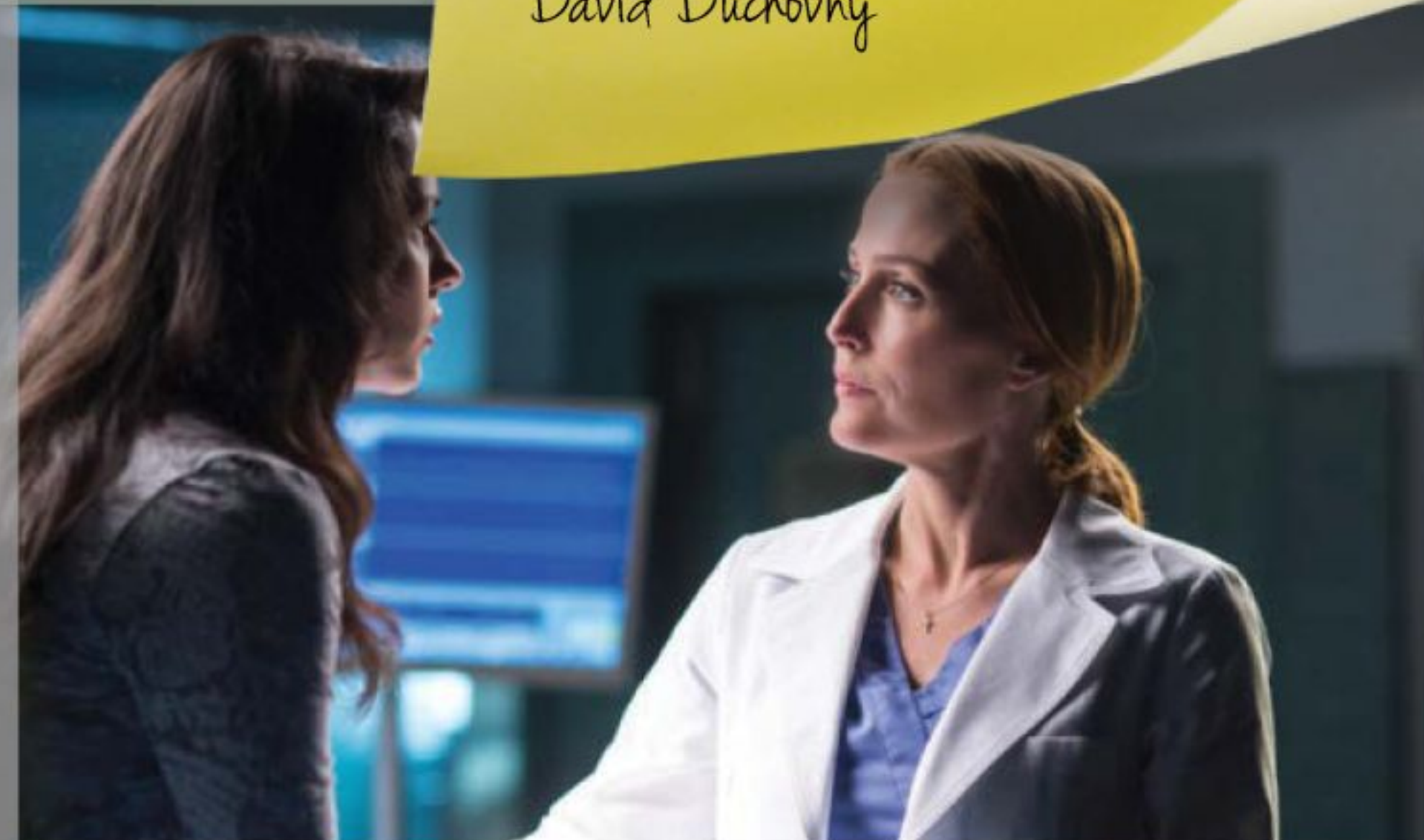
"Being Scully again was both easy and a little bit more challenging than I had expected," admits Gillian Anderson when quizzed about her return to her iconic character. "It took a few days to get into character, and most of that was because I've worked very hard to play women without a trace of Scully since I last played her. I think I buried her a lot further down than I thought I had. The women that I've played recently have been considerably more serious than Scully, so I found that when I was called upon to be Scully in a serious scene – I couldn't remember how Scully would hold her face. It was easier to get into her once we got to a more comedic episode or the scenes where there's a bit more levity. In fact, I think it was through her levity and her innocence in comparison to the other characters that I found her again."

When it comes to the plot of the miniseries, Duchovny is eager to reveal that Mulder is in a very difficult place at the start of the first episode. "It's interesting," he reveals. "We only have six episodes, so where do you start and where do you finish? I think it was smart for Chris to begin with Mulder in a place where he's just not clued in any more. That's how the show starts. Basically, he's given up. For starters, he's not shaving, but I don't think it's a spoiler to say that Mulder is going to be re-involved."

The smirk on Duchovny's face soon disappears when he reveals the state of the relationship between Mulder and Scully. "[They're] are not together, so he's not in a really happy place. He's not emotionally engaged in his work, or with his ex-wife – or whatever Scully is. I get confused myself. I don't know if we were ever married or not. I think we were, but I don't know. A man should know these things! They've taken everything away from him, but over these six episodes he's going to get some of it back. It's a new conspiracy, too.



Basically, Mulder's given up. For starters, he's not shaving, but I don't think it's a spoiler to say that Mulder is going to be re-involved  
David Duchovny



Anderson says Scully's levity and innocence is key to the character.







It's not a continuation of the old. It's an abrupt turn."

It doesn't take too long for Mulder to return to form in the show. By episode three, which fans will be delighted to hear was written and directed by *The X-Files* favourite Darin Morgan, Mulder's spark is back.

"My favourite moment from the new series is in Darin's script," admits Duchovny. "Darin was one of my favourite writers on the show, and it's an episode where Mulder rediscovers his mojo. It takes him a little while to get going because he's so down in the beginning – but in Darin's episode, he's firing up again. At one point, he goes off on this two-page soliloquy about his theories on pretty much everything, and Scully says, 'That's the way I like my Mulder.' I love that moment. He goes on and on and on about monsters and conspiracies, and his face lights up. It's good to see him like that again."

Despite the fact that the miniseries hasn't even aired yet, eager fans of the franchise have already cried out for more than a limited six-episode arc for *The X-Files* – and there have already been rumours circulating that a rebooted show could continue with a different pair of agents in the lead roles. Adding fuel to the fire was the casting announcement of Robbie Amell and Lauren Ambrose as sharp and confident FBI agents Miller and Einstein in one episode of the miniseries.

Diverting away from the rumour mill, Carter explains his thoughts on the future of the franchise: "We've got to do this really well for there to be an opportunity for more." Before departing the Vancouver set for the day, he adds with a smile, "Will there be more? We will see."

*The X-Files* will air on Channel 5 later in the year.

After a rocky start, Mulder will rediscover his love of the inexplicable.



Old Friends & New Faces



Apart from Fox Mulder and Dana Scully, who will we see in the miniseries?



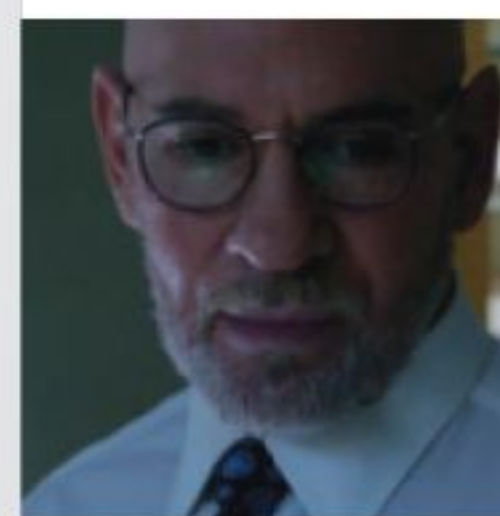
## The Cigarette Smoking Man

Played by: William B Davis

*The X-Files* wouldn't feel right without the Cigarette Smoking Man, right? The iconic character has been confirmed for the miniseries. And yes, he's still smoking.

Endorse

Send InMail



## Walter Skinner

Played by: Mitch Pileggi

Apart from Mulder and Scully, Skinner is the only character who has appeared in all nine seasons of the show, as well as both movies. The grumpy boss is back for more.

Endorse

Send InMail



## Tad O'Malley

Played by: Joel McHale

An intense new character named Tad O'Malley plays an important role in the miniseries. He's described as a conservative news anchor who becomes an unlikely ally to Mulder.

Endorse

Send InMail



## Monica Reyes

Played by: Annabel Gish

Robert Patrick's Agent Doggett won't appear in the miniseries – but there's a silver lining in the return of Agent Monica Reyes, who first appeared in the show in Season Eight.

Endorse

Send InMail



## The Lone Gunmen

Played by: Dean Haglund, Tom Braidwood and Bruce Harwood

Despite being killed off in the ninth season, you will see the Lone Gunmen in 2016. How did they survive? A comic book series released in 2013 revealed that their deaths were faked.

Endorse

Send InMail



# THE X-FILES BY THE NUMBERS

Scully says...

SCIENCE 40+ times

MULDER, IT'S ME... 36+ times

## Where is Agent Mulder?

GILLIAN ANDERSON 201 episodes

DAVID DUCHOVNY 186 episodes

## Season premiere/finale viewing figures

PREMIERE

FINALE



## The badassdom of Walter Skinner

Find a quote, speech and more

*"I'm one more non-answer away from getting a federal warrant and searching this entire building"*

**"Use your head, Scully. It'll save your ass"**

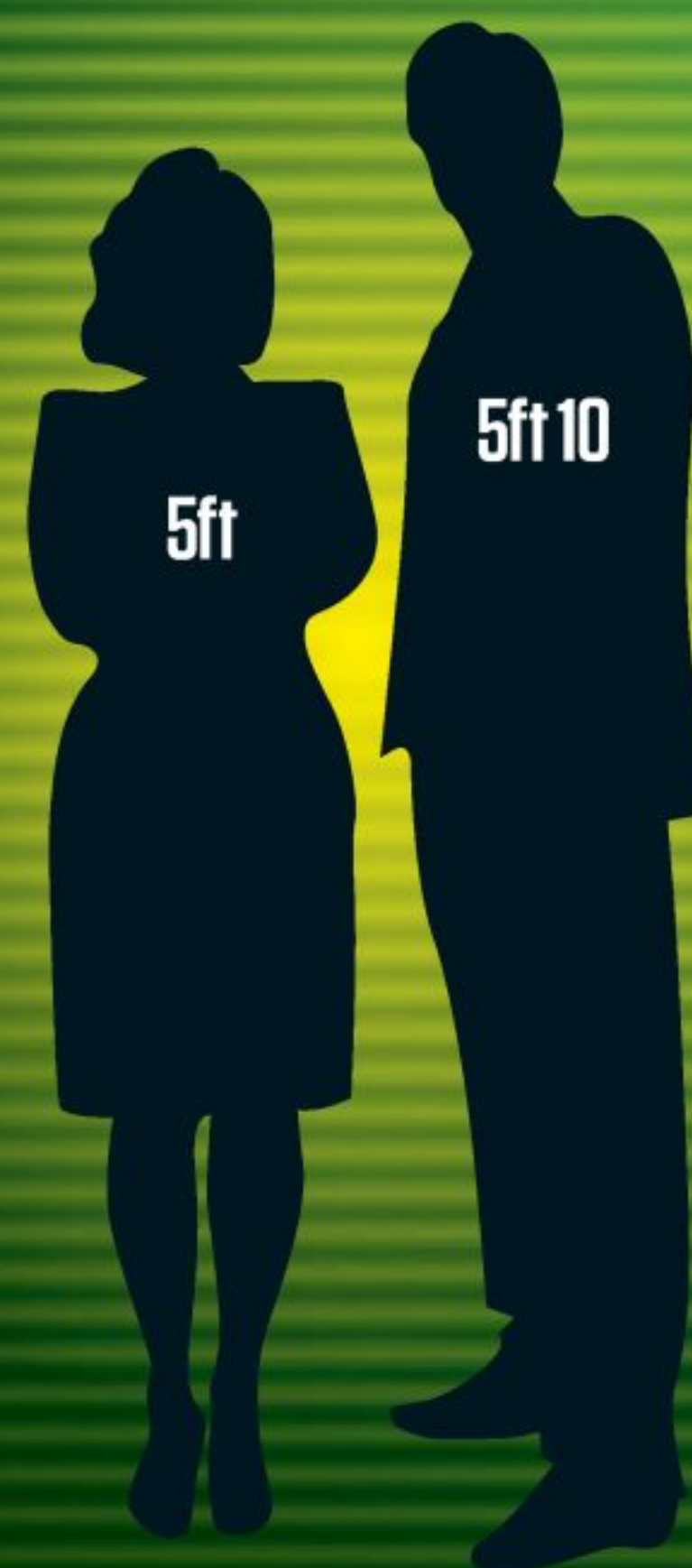
**"I stand right on the line you keep crossing"**

*"I don't like pointing guns at pregnant women any more than I like them pointing guns at me!"*

**"This is where you pucker up and kiss my ass"**



**"I WAS JUST NEVER SURE YOUR LITTLE FEET COULD REACH THE PEDALS"**



## YOU AGAIN! THE VILLAINS WHO KEPT COMING BACK FOR MORE



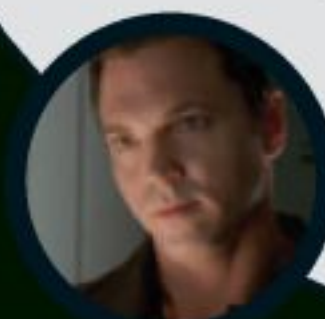
Diana Fowley (7 eps)



Knowle Rohrer (5 eps)



Alien Bounty Hunter (10 eps)



Alex Krycek (24 eps)



Cigarette Smoking Man (38 eps)

**KIM MANNERS DIRECTED 52 EPISODES, MORE THAN 1/4 OF THE SHOW'S ENTIRE RUN. HE PRODUCED 132.**





1,600 gallons/7,000 litres of red paint to paint a quarry, 32 trucks worth of gravel removed to bury a train carriage in Anasazi



■ THE X-FILES MOVIE BUDGET - \$66 MILLION  
■ GROSS - \$189,176,423



■ THE X-FILES I WANT TO BELIEVE BUDGET - \$30 MILLION  
■ GROSS - \$68,369,434

### No X-Files, no...

Breaking Bad/Better Call Saul  
Vince Gilligan

Millenium Chris Carter

Final Destination  
Glen Morgan/James Wong

Homeland John Shiban

The Man In The High Castle  
Frank Spotnitz

## 20 YEARS OF NON-SMOKING BEFORE THE START OF THE X-FILES FOR CSM



DEPARTMENT OF INVESTIGATION



FBI



THIS CERTIFIES THAT THE SIGNATURE AND PHOTOGRAPH HERE ON ITS  
SPECIAL AGENT *Dana Scully*  
OF THE FEDERAL BUREAU OF JUSTICE UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

## Goodbye, Clarice

Gillian Anderson had a clause in her contract that prevented her from playing any other FBI agents, meaning that she missed out on playing Agent Clarice Starling in *Hannibal*.

## The awful life and times of Alex Krycek

### Duane Barry

Messes with Mulder, seen talking to Duane Barry before his death, disappears

### Anasazi

Beaten up by Mulder

### The Blessing Way

Tries to kill Scully but ends up killing her sister instead

### Paper Clip

The Syndicate tries to blow him up in his car

### Piper Maru

Gets infected by the black oil in an airport toilet

### Apocrypha

Abandoned by the black oil and is trapped by CSM in the silo

### Tunguska

Handcuffed to Skinner's balcony, gets taken to Russia

### Terma

Gets his arm cut off by Russian villagers

### Patient X

Is handcuffed in a cell with no food and water

### Requiem

Liberated from a Tunisian prison

### Existence

Shot in the head



■ 202 EPISODES  
■ 71 MYTHOLOGY EPISODES







# DEADPOOL'S COMING

HE'S ALMOST READY FOR YOU. WE TAKE A LOOK AT WHY TIM MILLER'S FILM CAN'T POSSIBLY FAIL, AND SPEAK TO DEADPOOL COMIC CREATOR, WRITER AND ARTIST ROB LIEFELD ABOUT WHAT'S COMING UP FOR THE MERC WITH A MOUTH...

WORDS POPPY-JAY PALMER INTERVIEW CHRIS ANDERSON

**A**FTER TEETERING IN PRODUCTION LIMBO FOR ALMOST A DECADE, TIM MILLER'S DEADPOOL DIDN'T BEGIN TO GATHER SPEED UNTIL SAN DIEGO COMIC-CON IN 2014.

When a graphic novel series is loved as much as this one is, even the smallest of mistakes – a misjudged tone, off casting, unusual costumes, anything – can send any superhero movie straight to the DVD bargain bin. As a personality, Deadpool is probably one of the more memorable in the world of Marvel, which is why so many people love him. But one wrong move (or movie) could ruin it forever. Which is why we were totally with the long-time fans for fretting over the tiniest of details: it won't be funny enough, it won't be violent enough. Why are they casting Ryan Reynolds *again*? Do they not remember *X-Men: Origins*? It could only ever go very well or very badly.

Then 2014's San Diego Comic-Con happened. Test footage for the film was presented during the *Deadpool* panel, and attendees had a good time while the rest of the world grinded their teeth enviously. Then someone – no one really knows who – leaked the footage online, and it was nothing short of glorious. That someone, whoever it was, is now a hero. Some spread rumours that it might have been Tim Miller himself. Miller wondered if it was Ryan Reynolds. But that doesn't matter anymore. All three minutes of the footage were spectacular. It featured a motion-capture performance from

Reynolds, but his Wade Wilson voice and mannerisms were mesmerising, the suit was one of the best superhero suit designs we'd ever seen, and the tone was absolutely spot-on. It was gory, funny and amazing. Thanks to that one bit of leaked footage and the overwhelming reaction it provoked, Tim Miller's vision for *Deadpool* forced Fox to take it more seriously. The film was fast-tracked, more people got involved, and now we can almost reach out and touch it. So whoever it was who leaked that clip, we thank you.

A year and a half later, the footage is almost impossible to track down, but that doesn't matter. Now, we have trailers! We have posters! We have stills, featurettes and in-character clips! No matter what Fox puts out, we lap it up. It's all note-perfect, and it's all the Merc with a Mouth we wanted to see. That could be partly down to *Deadpool* creator Rob Liefeld's involvement. He didn't write the film, provide the storyline or anything like that, but he's definitely had some influence. He's been involved with the *Deadpool* film from as far back as 2009, and communicated with everyone from





# BIG MOVIE

Deadpool

## The Deadpool Bible

Where to start with the Merc's comics



### New Mutants Vol 1 #98

**Year:** 1991  
**Writers:** Rob Liefeld, Fabian Nicieza

The Merc with a Mouth's first appearance is a doozy. It's also where many fans fell in love with the assassin almost 25 years ago. Find out where it all began.



### Deadpool / Death Annual '98

**Year:** 1998  
**Writer:** Joe Kelly

A kiss, a curse, a cure... In this one-off annual, Deadpool looks back on his time in the hospice and his ongoing love affair with Death. A must-read.



### Deadpool Vol 2 #33

**Year:** October 1999  
**Writer:** Joe Kelly

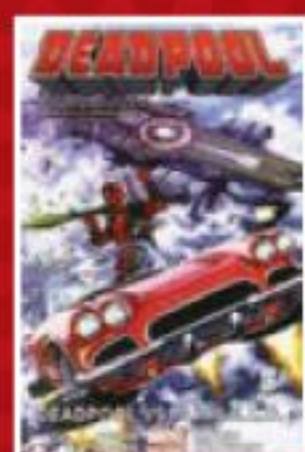
Space! The Final Frontier... these are the voyages of everyone's favourite killer-for-hire. Everything ends up being so much more difficult when there's no atmosphere.



### Cable & Deadpool #31

**Year:** 2006  
**Writer:** Fabian Nicieza

Deadpool goes up against the renegade heroes while Cable is busy running two countries. Or does he? Maybe he wants to use the Registration Act for his own gain...



### Deadpool Vol 4 #6

**Year:** 2002  
**Writers:** Brian Posehn, Gerry Duggan

When SHIELD adds Deadpool to their team, they are pretty sure they are going to regret it. It's not long before he declares a one-man war on the world peacekeeping agency.

➤ producer Lauren Schuler Donner and her crew, and executive producers Rhett Reese and Paul Mernick, to Tim Miller and Ryan Reynolds.

"They've been very kind and generous in sharing the experience with me," Liefeld tells us. "That said, and let me be clear in giving credit where it's due, I'm not a filmmaker. This is their film and their vision – and it's spectacular – but they were above and beyond in always keeping me in the loop, especially once Tim came on board."

A fair few comic-book movies have managed to impact their source material, even within the field of adaptations: Christopher Nolan's *Dark Knight* trilogy turned Batman into a rock star. Gone were the colourful, campy characters we knew from the Sixties TV series and film interpretations like Tim Burton's *Batman Returns*.

Fans of this particular genre are known for liking the adaptations to stay true to their sources as much as possible. Internet outrage over deviations, like Michael B Jordan being cast as Johnny Storm in the *Fantastic Four* movie, prove this. His race isn't relevant to either the storyline or his character, so the change didn't really matter, but people still cared because it was something different from the stories they'd grown up reading. But with Batman, the change – making the story darker and grittier – really paid off. Nolan managed to redefine what we expect from superhero movies, and inform all of Warner Bros' DC titles still to come.

But with a *Deadpool* adaptation, grittiness is a definite no. The darkness can stay, but grittiness could be enough to ruin it entirely, and turn off any potential new comic fans. Tortured stares, hero angst and sincerity wouldn't suit Deadpool in any universe, which is no doubt why many were worried about the prospect of a new, big-budget take on Wade Wilson. But from what we've seen in trailers and in-character video clips, Miller, Reynolds and the rest of the cast and crew have really captured what's *Deadpool's* about. It's funny, stylish, violent, naughty, and what everyone was waiting for. More importantly, it has Liefeld's endorsement: "What I can say is that they beyond nailed it," he says. That's good enough for us.

"I love [Miller and Reynolds], and they have championed *Deadpool* all these years, never gave up, and when finally given the chance have delivered a movie that exceeds all expectations. I firmly

believe this will transform the comic book film as we know it.

"The movie benefits from every daring move that they made. They went for the R rating, the graphic content, the outlandish humour... it sets the entire experience apart. There's Deadpool as you've known him, and then there's Ryan Reynolds in a *Deadpool* film, and I can't contain my enthusiasm. This will define Deadpool just as Robert Downey Jr defined Iron Man for a generation. This will be the ultimate *Deadpool*!"

The next huge concern about the film (and we do mean *huge*) was the age certificate. Going for a hard R rating could be considered a bit of a risk on Miller's part. Superhero movies rarely do well when a lot of its audience isn't old enough to see it. Just look at *Dredd*. But on the other hand, setting the certificate at a cleaner PG-13 would have been a risk – as Ryan Reynolds joked it was on April Fool's Day last year. What would that have meant for *Deadpool*? Would he have had to have been as squeaky clean as Captain America? Would he have been like Spider-Man, but older and with a slightly more colourful vocabulary? That, of course, would never have worked in the eyes of the people who have been with Deadpool for a long time. So what's more important: making sure as many people as possible will see your







**"TIM MILLER AND  
RYAN REYNOLDS HAVE  
DELIVERED A MOVIE  
THAT HAS EXCEEDED  
ALL EXPECTATIONS"**  
ROB LIEFELD

Will Wade's love interest  
Vanessa (Morena Baccarin)  
become Copycat?

movie, or making sure the character lives up to what the graphic novel fans want to see?

By keeping as close to the original character as possible, maybe more people will realise that yes, Deadpool is something they need more of in their lives, and new readers will be spawned without the fear of disappointment when the comics turn out to be completely different to the film that drew them in the first place. Miller made a good call.

After cracking into the early *Deadpool* comics, you'd be forgiven for thinking that Liefeld and writer Fabian Nicieza co-created *Deadpool* way back in 1991, especially considering Nicieza scripted the graphic novel while Liefeld thought up the story and provided the artwork, but that's actually a false assumption. Almost everything you know and think about Deadpool is down to Liefeld, which is why we are that bit more thankful for his involvement in the film.

"I created Deadpool," Liefeld insists. "Absent me, he doesn't exist or make it to the page. His name, look, back story, Vanessa; that's all me. In as matter-of-fact as I can express it, because Fabian scripted Deadpool's first appearance, he is contextually entitled to equity and co-authorship. That was how the deal was set up in 1991. Pretty great deal, right? I'm happy for him. In short, I tell people that if Deadpool is kicking, shooting or cutting you while making a smart remark, that's me, that's Liefeld. He's had a great many writers give him some terrific wisecracks along the way, each contributing to the pantheon. Joe Kelly broke the fourth wall and added a whole new layer. Fabian's miniseries [*The Circle Chase*] with Joe Madureira is great, I love it – it's also chock-full of my characters and concepts like Zero, Vanessa and Kane."

With the tone the *Deadpool* film is going for, it'll be difficult to weave him ➤

DEADPOOL  
Deadpool's Coming



## Deadpool on...

### Greetings

"Hi. I'm Deadpool, and I'm going to shoot you now."

### Hobbies

**"Been thinking about starting up a superhero porn site, whaddyou think?"**

### Food

"Did someone say 'chimichanga'? Never mind, that was just the sound of my skull and brains healing."

### Duct tape

**"Man, I love duct tape. I love how it tapes. I love the sound it makes. I love saying it. Duct tape, duct tape, duct tape. Duct tape, duct tape, duct tape..."**

### Electronics

"My TV didn't work so I kicked it and it started working again."

### His appearance

"Hey, if you looked like Ryan Reynolds crossed with a Shar-Pei, you'd understand."

### Saving people

**"Citizens! It is time to be thrown violently to safety!"**

### Intimacy

"No one could bear to look at me ever again. Never again would I feel a woman's soft touch on my... er, cheek."

### Superpowers

"Shhh. My common sense is tingling."

### Family

**"I'll never have a son, but if I did and he came out half as awesome as you... what I'm trying to say... I'll always be there when you need me."**

One Deadpool and two guns can easily take on a crowd of criminals.







# BIG MOVIE

Deadpool

➤ and the X-Men together in any future spin-offs, what with the former's tendency to break the fourth wall and the X-Men being, well, the X-Men. The two properties are unlikely to mix well, which is probably for the best. But if push comes to shove and Fox wants to sell that combination, Liefeld could probably think of a way to do it. After all, he's done it before. It's not his most well-known project, but his talents were a huge part of the success of the *New Mutants* and *X-Force* graphic novels, coming up with the characters and plots while Nicieza provided the dialogue.

"I was never just the artist," he tells us. "I had earned my seat as the writer of the book, and issue #98 [which introduced Deadpool] was my first issue as a writer. I am listed and credited, and have equity as the writer of all those stories. That's how the 1991 contract reads, and the fans of that era remember very vividly the wild rides I provided them. I conceived of the stories and Fabian provided dialogue, word balloons that reflected my agenda and motivations. It's the same way I've worked for two decades. Occasionally I'll provide dialogue if time permits. All those *New Mutants* and *X-Force* stories and all those characters were generated by a very hyperactive young 20-something, and I wish I could go back and give young Rob a hug. Those characters weren't created in some company creative retreat: I imagined them onto the page, gave them a story and boom, we were off to the races!

"I pitched Deadpool to Marvel, very simply, as Spider-Man with guns and swords, with ties to the Weapon X programme [that created Wolverine]. It was a potent commercial concept, and I think that's turned out pretty well for everyone."

It's not just the film that uses Liefeld as a model to aspire to. Deadpool is a fairly new creation compared to other Marvel properties like Captain America and Iron Man, but it's still making an impact within the Marvel Comics universe. Liefeld's work has been such an asset to the brand that it created what it called 'Liefeld Corner', an area with all the toys and merchandise based on his work displayed as a sort of tribute. After a difficult relationship with the company, Liefeld left Marvel to form Image Comics, but Liefeld's Corner is still standing.

"Especially with a *Deadpool* film surging and the rampant rumours of an

*X-Force* movie coming hot on its heels," he says. "They've never stopped using my catalogue of characters in some form or another. And for that I am very grateful to both Marvel and the fans, who have never stopped expressing

**"I PITCHED DEADPOOL TO MARVEL AS SPIDER-MAN WITH GUNS AND SWORDS, WITH TIES TO WEAPON X"**

ROB LIEFELD

their enthusiasm for my characters and designs. Thank you!"

After the excitement off the back of the film dies down (we reckon that will take us up to summer), *Deadpool* fans will be able to crack into a new story with Liefeld's upcoming graphic novel *Bad Blood*. Those craving back story will be pleased to know that it is set to fill in key details of Deadpool's past. It's also the first original graphic novel about the character that Marvel has ever published.

"I only wanted to do a project like this if it meant I could add something to the character, to his back story, and give him a real conflict and challenge, and now we're doing just that," Liefeld explains. "It's very exciting, and the early feedback [from Marvel] has been amazing!"

*Bad Blood* is being scripted by *X-Men* '92 writers Chad Bowers and Chris Sims, but the plot, pencils and inks are all Liefeld's work. "It was our editor, Jordan White, who suggested I work with them, and I'm a big fan of their *X-Men* '92 book, which revisits a classic era for the team," he tells us. "The stories there have featured Cable, Deadpool and *X-Force* over its run, so it's great to have them on board, and we'll be featuring a lot of the other characters I introduced during *New Mutants* and *X-Force*. For me, it's a story I've been thinking about for around 20 years, and I even started sketching it in my notebook back in 2007, which is something I do when I get ideas."

If Miller's film is successful – and let's be honest, it almost definitely will be – will Liefeld become a household name? Will Fox be able to expand the universe and get something out of the rest of his catalogue of characters, or will they be cracking on with as many *Deadpool* sequels as they can?

"The Brett Ratner *Youngblood* movie didn't make it past the initial deal memo, so there was never a finalised agreement. Cable is on everyone's mind at the moment, but just as with Deadpool, when evidence of his existence on film is available you'll know it, and that will be a loud and potent explosion, I'm certain." 🦋

*Deadpool* will be released in UK cinemas on 10 February.



Negasonic Teenage Warhead and Deadpool team up to fight crime.







### Arrow to the head

This is what happens when you don't pay attention in target practice.



### Decapitated

I'm going to have a headache in the morning.



### Laser beams in the eyeballs

I was considering laser-eye surgery to cure my short-sightedness. Not anymore.

### Head blown up

The only thing worse than being decapitated is when your head comes off via explosion.

### Elephant tusk through the gut

Like the elephant, the most majestic of all wounds, and yet the hardest to explain.

### De-legged

I guess I'll just sit here until my leg grows back. Might as well order a pizza.

### Glass everywhere

You know when you get a splinter and it feels like your life has ended? This is a million times worse.

### Knives to the shoulder

It's like being given the cold shoulder and being stabbed in the back at the same time.

### Disarmed

Disarmed? Get it? Because my arm has been chopped? Ha, ha, ha! I'm in so much pain.

How THE MERC GETS MURKED

Being able to heal yourself means you spend a lot of time getting maimed...



# PEGGY GOES TO HOLLYWOOD





AGENT CARTER  
IS HEADING TO  
THE GLITZ AND  
GLAMOUR OF  
HOLLYWOOD FOR  
SEASON TWO, BUT  
SHE DOESN'T HAVE  
VACATIONING ON  
HER MIND. WE TALK  
TO EXECUTIVE  
PRODUCERS AND  
WRITERS MICHELE  
FAZEKAS AND TARA  
BUTTERS ABOUT  
SPY SECRETS AND  
WHAT PEGGY IS UP  
TO NEXT...

WORDS **POPPY-JAY PALMER**  
INTERVIEWS **STEVE WRIGHT**

**D**ELAYED GRATIFICATION. THAT'S WHAT BRITISH FANS OF MARVEL'S AGENT CARTER HAVE BEEN EXPERIENCING SINCE LAST SUMMER, WHEN FOX FINALLY PICKED UP

the first season. And what a season it was. The enthusiasm is still strong seven months on, and this year we'll get to see Season Two only five days after the US. That's two helpings of *Agent Carter* in just over half a year! Crazy. Bless you, FOX.

A new season means a new setup, and a lot has changed since the first. One year on from 'Valediction', Agent Peggy Carter (Hayley Atwell) has travelled to the other side of the country entirely, going from dreary post-war New York to sunny Hollywood during the golden age of cinema, and most of the show's Season One ensemble seems to be joining her. Daniel Sousa (Enver Gjokaj) is following in the late Chief Dooley's footsteps by taking over the SSR's west coast bureau; Howard Stark (Dominic Cooper) has bought a Hollywood film production company for some reason, and Edwin Jarvis (James D'Arcy) is still craving adventure and following Peggy around like the trusty butler he is. It's all far removed from Season One, but executive producers and sometimes writers Michele Fazekas and Tara Butters reassure us that Agent Carter's second adventure will retain the spirit and old-school spy charm that made the first so irresistible. ➤



➤ “The nice thing is it’s still our show, but we’ve really embraced the look of film noir and LA storytelling,” says Fazekas. “It looks beautiful, and this even goes down to wardrobe and make-up, where the colours are a little bit brighter and there’s not a lot of overcoats, so it looks a lot better. When we were doing the first season, a lot of our cinema touchstones were both classic noir films and more modern noir like *Chinatown* or *LA Confidential*, and it was something we’d been talking about for a while.”

In addition to a new location, there will also be a new adversary, according to Fazekas. “The villain of the season is Whitney Frost (played by *The Newsroom*’s Wynn Everett), who comes from the comic-books – she’s Madam Masque – and we’re doing our own version of Madam Masque. In our show we’ve sort of based the version on the actress Hedy Lamarr... She was an actress, but she was also an inventor, and invented this thing called frequency hopping – which is how you control torpedoes so that you couldn’t block the signal – and so she was sort of this secret scientific genius, so that’s what we’re doing with Whitney Frost, where she’s this very glamorous actress who’s also a genius.”

“One of things we kept talking about [during Season One] was Hollywood glamour and that time period,” Butters explains. “We were shooting New York from Los Angeles, and we realised that we were losing out on some great opportunities since there were so many original locations that are still around in LA. As we discussed it, we realised it would be a fun backdrop to give the second season more flair, and to just add more noir aspects to the storytelling.”

It’s not going to be all Hollywood razzle dazzle, though. Peggy’s motive behind venturing out to the west coast is to help a friend in need: Chief Sousa and the SSR need her assistance with a case, and she’s definitely not one to say no to a mystery.

“There is – certainly in the first episode – a different way you do things out here [in Los Angeles],” says Fazekas. “You see Peggy coming up against these glamorous, powerful people who expect her to treat them with respect and deference, and she’s like, ‘No, I don’t care if you’re famous, I’m here to ask you questions.’ So it’s interesting to see her travelling in these worlds. She can sort of slide into it. It’s interesting to see Peggy meeting actresses on a movie set and being annoyed by the entire thing!”

For many fans, Peggy and Jarvis’s unconventional relationship was what drew them to the show in the first place. It’s so

much more fun and *human* than we’re used to from this kind of show. Thankfully, we can look forward to seeing a lot more of it. Fazekas reveals that the pair will go through a great arc during Season Two.

“When she first comes out here he picks her up at the airport. She’s in the car and he says, ‘I am begging you, let me drive you around.’ He’s been craving the adventure. But over the course of the season that comes back to bite him, because yes, he’s risking his life and people are shooting at him, but there really is a price for this, and he has to decide, is this what I really want to do? They have a really great story about that.”

The rest of the cast are experiencing mixed fortunes. “Howard is Howard, and sort of pops in to help them while being Howard. Sousa hasn’t spoken to Peggy since she left New York. In the last episode of Season One, he works up the courage to ask her out for a drink. In the moment she says, ‘I’m sorry I can’t, I’ve got to do something,’ and they walk away from that interaction with different impressions. She sort of smiles at the end of it, like, ‘Oh, maybe this

is a thing that I might consider,’ but when you see the look on his face, he’s sort of crushed. Between last season and this season he’s taken the LA job, and he’s taken it in part because he’s like, ‘I can’t work with her anymore, it’s too hard.’ So when she arrives in LA, she’s like, ‘You

know, I called you a few times, and I never heard back,’ So there’s a lot of unspoken awkwardness between them that they work through in an interesting way, I will say!”

One of *Agent Carter*’s main merits, besides the high-octane storylines, amazing period costumes and sets and the tight, witty scripts is the fact that it managed to break popular stereotypes of women both in Forties America and the superhero genre. With every new scene, Peggy proves herself to be more interesting, complex and well rounded than we previously thought. For Season Two, we can look forward to watching the character develop even further.

“At the end of the first season she has sort of put Cap to rest,” says Fazekas. “So much of the first season was about her grieving for Captain America and getting over that, and now she’s sort of coming out here. What we said when we were building this season was LA is a place where people come to reinvent themselves or start over again or start a new phase of her life, so that’s what we had in mind for Peggy. She’s like, ‘Maybe there’s more to life than work!’

“When you look at a movie like *Chinatown*, Jack Nicholson’s character starts ➤

“WE’VE REALLY EMBRACED THE LOOK OF FILM NOIR AND LA STORYTELLING”  
MICHELE FAZEKAS



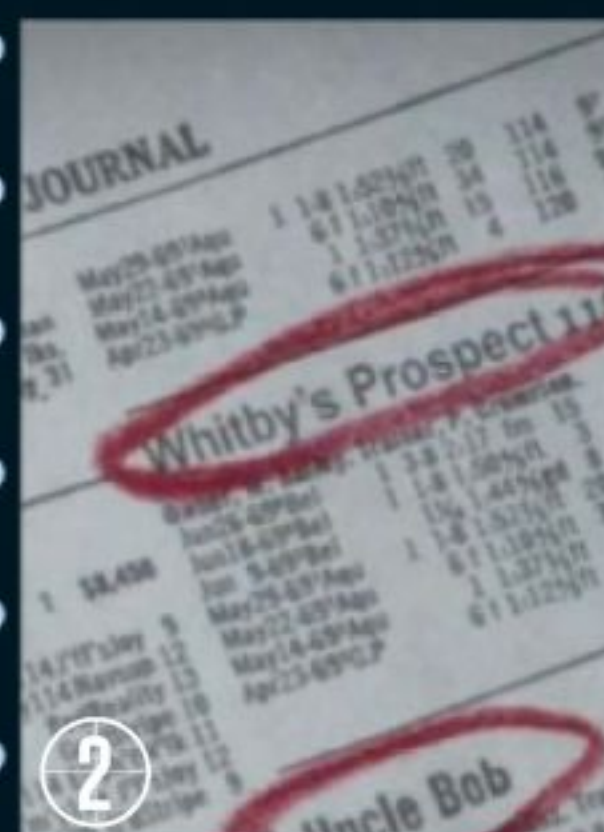




Above; Peggy Carter (Hayley Atwell) still has to fight her way through the patriarchy, but this season she's doing it on the west coast. Left; Hollywood will provide more villains for Peggy to defeat, which means more brilliant fight sequences.



1



2



3



4



5



6



7

## Across the universe

Did you spot these Season One Easter eggs?

### 1 Anton Vanko

1.1, 'Now Is Not The End'

The Soviet scientist that consulted with Peggy and Jarvis in the series' premiere was none other than Anton Vanko, the father of Ivan, Mickey Rourke's villain in *Iron Man 2*. In the comics, Anton goes on to become the villain Crimson Dynamo.

### 2 Whitby's Prospect

1.1, 'Now Is Not The End'

Peggy advises Agent Sousa to place a bet on the racehorse Whitby's Prospect. That name is a reference to London's oldest riverside tavern The Prospect of Whitby. The pub was also featured in a scene from *D-Day The Sixth Of June* (1956), a film about an American soldier who falls in love with an English servicewoman during WWII.

### 3 Lucky Star Cab Company

1.1, 'Now Is Not The End'

The cab Peggy steps out of is from Lucky Star Cab Company, the same company Steve Rogers rides with in *Captain America: The First Avenger*.

### 4 Goodman, Kurtz & Holliway

1.1, 'Now Is Not The End'

When Angie mentions Mary, one of her neighbours in their apartment building, she says she works as "a legal secretary at Goodman, Kurtz & Holliway". The firm is the very same place of employment as Jennifer Walters, more commonly known in the comics as She-Hulk.

### 5 Doctor Abraham Erskine

1.1, 'Now Is Not The End' / 1.2, 'Bridge And Tunnel'

The Vita-Ray Detector Peggy uses to scan SSR workers for Nitramene features the inscription 'PROPERTY OF A. ERSKINE', which is a reference to Dr Abraham Erskine, Stanley Tucci's character in *Captain America: The First Avenger*.

### 6 Roxxon Oil

1.2, 'Bridge And Tunnel'

Hugh Jones, President of the Roxxon Oil Company, makes an appearance, referencing Roxxon from *Iron Man 2*, *Agents Of SHIELD* and Marvel one-shot *A Funny Thing Happened On The Way To Thor's Hammer*. In the original *Captain America* comics, Jones became a supervillain after being possessed by the evil deity Set, and gave the order to have Howard and Maria Stark killed. Could this be a hint of what's to come?

### 7 Black Widows

1.5, 'The Iron Ceiling'

When the SSR and the Howling Commandos go to the Soviet military complex they come across the boarding school where Dottie Underwood was trained as a girl. Could this also be the school where Natasha Romanoff was trained to be a Black Widow assassin?





out very cynical and above everything, and he gets dragged into this case. By the end of the story, he is so personally invested that he doesn't care about himself, he doesn't care about anything else; he only cares about doing what the right thing is. So when we're telling Peggy's story this season, Peggy is this tremendous idealist. Her ideal is Captain America, and everyone better meet this ideal or she's going to tell you how to do it. Over the course of the season, she's going to discover the corruption and crime that are even within her own organisation, and so there's somewhat of a disillusionment to her idealism. She almost has a reverse story, at least as far as what she thought about the SSR. That's a story we're going to continue in Season Three, but she goes through the wringer!"

Though *Agent Carter* stands on its own feet, Season One did have a couple of sneaky links to the rest of the Marvel Cinematic Universe – something that's always welcome among fans. Is Season Two going to tie into Marvel Studios' plethora of upcoming projects? Yes, according to Fazekas.

"We touch on a thing called Darkforce, which comes from the *Doctor Strange* universe. While we're not telling the story of Doctor Strange, it's a big part of that world, and we sort of hint at the Dark Dimension, and that something is there on the other side. Because this is 1947, they don't understand what they're dealing with, and they don't call it Darkforce; they call it 'Zero Matter', so there's going to touch on that."

"The team at Marvel Studios has been great and very supportive of the show," says Butters. "What they often do, which is fantastic, is they'll see the direction we're going and kind of say, 'Wouldn't it be cool if you added this in there?' They help us with the Easter eggs."

There is a downside to being attached to a larger film universe, however: the writers can't always send the show in the direction they want it to go. They occasionally have to change the story in case what they are planning throws off the rest of the MCU.

"[Christopher] Markus and [Stephen] McFeely wrote the pilot of *Agent Carter*, and as much as they are very busy, they haven't been as involved as they would like to be," admits Fazekas. "As long as we're not contradicting something they're doing or doing something that they're already planning on doing. I think the bigger thing for us is not wanting to repeat stories that are being told on *SHIELD*, intentionally or unintentionally."

Along with bountiful Easter eggs and more Peggy-and-Jarvis mishaps, Season Two brings with it new characters and brilliant guest stars, including Lotte Verbeek (*Outlander*) as Jarvis's wife Ana, Kurtwood Smith (1987's *RoboCop*) as Vernon Masters,

Top; As a woman in Forties law enforcement, one of Peggy's greatest strengths is blending in with the crowd.

Above; Agent Daniel Sousa (Enver Gjokaj) is moving up in the world, and is now leading the SSR's LA bureau.

Right; Edwin Jarvis (James D'Arcy) misses his and Peggy's adventures, and quickly grows bored of his humdrum life.





and Ken Marino (*Goosebumps*) as mob boss Joseph Manfredi.

“Tara and I know Ken from our show *Reaper*, and we love him,” Fazekas tells us. “We’ve put him in pilots, he’s done it as a favour to us, and we knew we wanted to have Manfredi. But when you start to write a down-the-middle mobster, you think, ‘Yeah, this has been done, and it’s been done better on *The Sopranos* and in *The Godfather* and *Goodfellas*, so why bother retreading them?’

The great thing that Ken brings is obviously comedy, but he has a such a range – his dramatic range is as great as his comedic range. Manfredi is an old flame of Whitney Frost before she got real famous, and he’s still really in love with her. The character is so much fun, because he can be funny, and he can be a psycho, but at the end of the day he’s in love, so you get to see a lot of depth to the character in what could have just been a straightforward mobster. Ken bring this to a whole new level – because we got Ken the role got bigger, he’s lovely and a delight to work with.”

When a character as good as Peggy walks into your life, it’s difficult not to latch on to them, which is what countless *Agent Carter* fans have done since the show’s very first US premiere a year ago.



Above; Peggy and Howard Stark (Dominic Cooper) will be reunited when Stark starts his own film production company.

Left; Peggy will get more opportunity for target practice when new threats present themselves in Season Two.

Peggy-love has been expressed in every imaginable medium, from cosplays and fan art to musical tributes to YouTube videos. But how has the show’s crew taken the viewers’ boundless enthusiasm?

“We couldn’t be happier!” enthuses Butters. “Fans have really embraced the show. I love all the fan art and their depictions of Peggy in the show, and Jarvis. I think that it was very well critically accepted, and I actually personally think

this season’s better, so I’m excited about the fans’ response and look forward to seeing what people think!

“Hayley brings something to the character that is both a strength and sensitivity. You want to be around her; you feel like she’ll protect you, but at the

same time she’s not cold. For all the strength she has, I don’t believe she’s cold. She comes across as caring, she has the same ideals as Cap in a lot of ways, and she’s a moral compass. It’s nice to see somebody believe that we can be better than who we are. There are a lot of similarities with Cap in that way, and it goes for her appeal... there’s a fearlessness to her.”

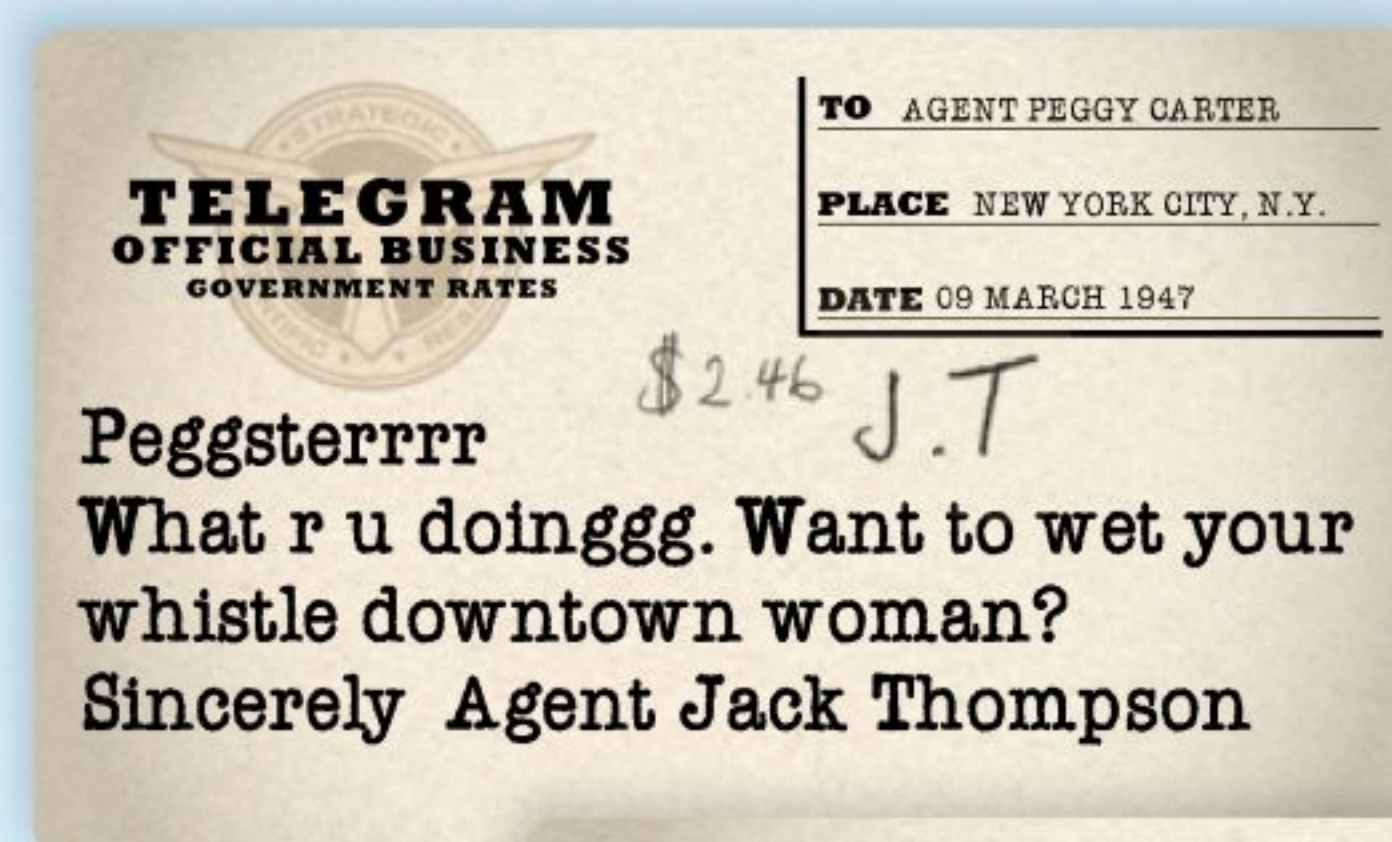
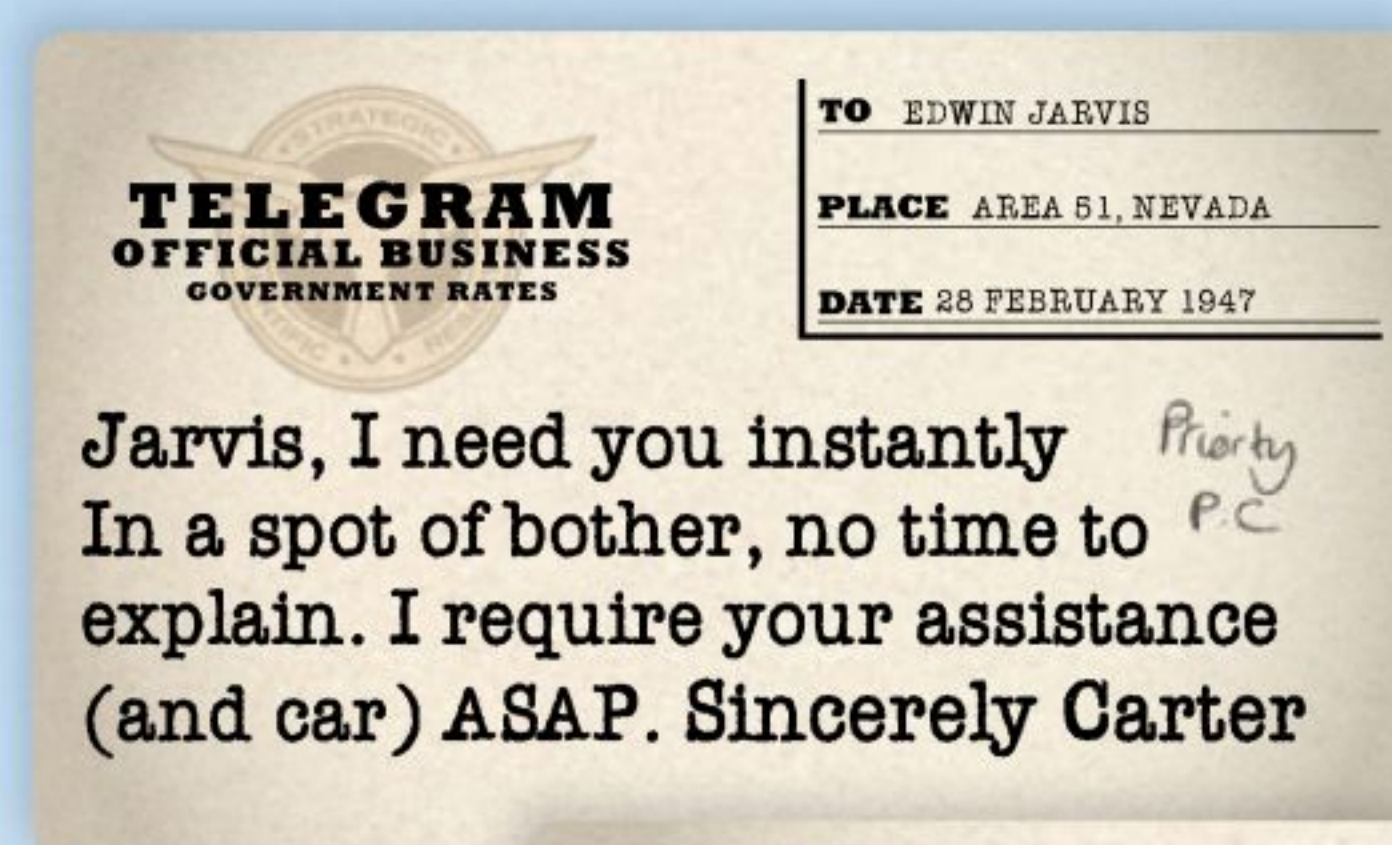
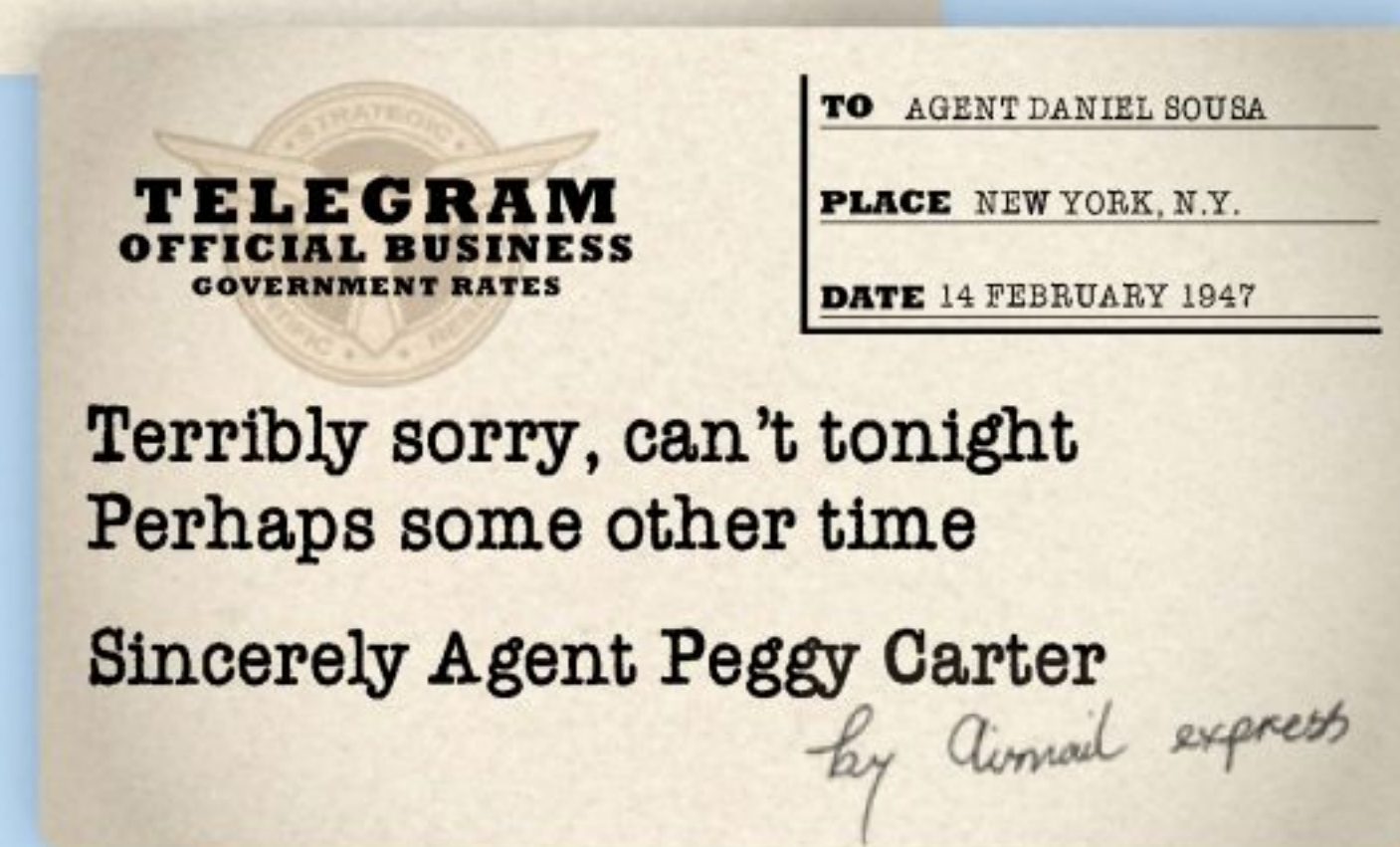
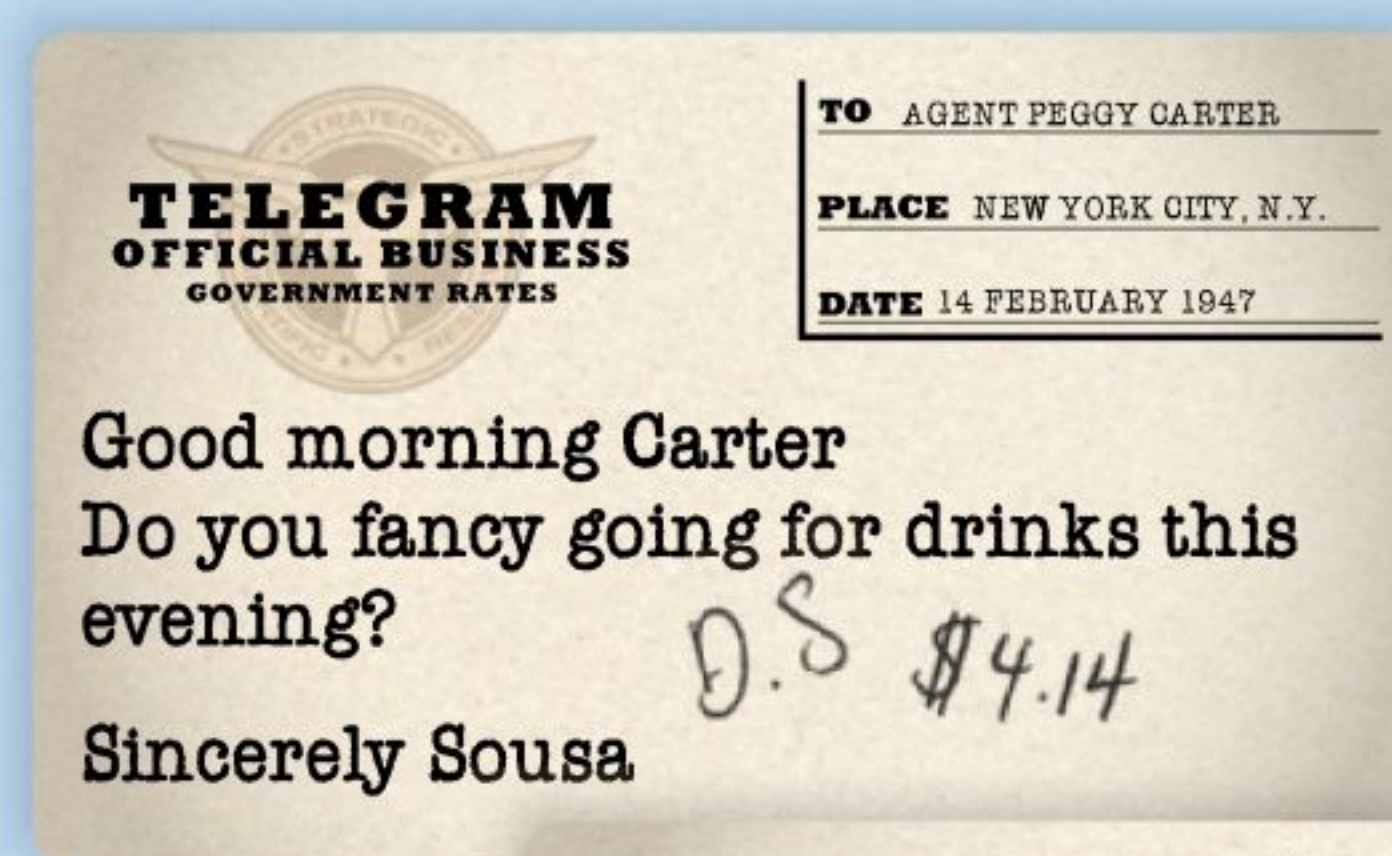


*Agent Carter* Season Two premieres on 28 January 2016.

“HAYLEY BRINGS BOTH STRENGTH AND SENSITIVITY TO THE CHARACTER”  
TARA BUTTERS

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# BIG MOVIE

The 5th Wave







# WORLD



## THE 5TH WAVE

World Wide Wave

FORMER HIT-GIRL CHLOË GRACE MORETZ FIGHTS TO SAVE HUMANITY IN THE 5TH WAVE. WE SPOKE TO MORETZ, CO-STAR LIEV SCHREIBER AND MORE ABOUT FACING THE END OF DAYS...



# WIDE

WORDS WILL LAWRENCE

# WAVE

**IT WAS A FOX THAT SAVED HIS LIFE. RISING STAR ALEX ROE WAS PREPARING FOR HIS ROLE AS EVAN WALKER IN THE FORTHCOMING SCI-FI ADVENTURE-DRAMA THE 5TH WAVE, HAVING**

enrolled on an outdoor survival course. The characters in the film are caught in the grip of a modern-day dystopia where civilisation has crumbled, prompting the 25-year-old Englishman to get a better understanding of his character's situation.

"Because the characters are surviving on their own, and they have to experience what it is like to be alone and to be constantly fearful for their life, we went to a survival camp," he explains.

Survivalists run the camp. "They teach you how to make a shelter, and they give you a fake gun and send you out," Roe adds. "Then, at some point in the night they sneak up on you, and you have to shoot them before they shoot you."

Heading into the wilderness, Roe made his shelter and slipped into a half-sleep, awaiting the forthcoming attack. Then, in the middle of the night, he was suddenly startled from his slumber. "There was a fox that stood on something, and it made a sound that woke me up," he recalls.

"And then I heard another sound coming from further away, so I got up and fired the gun just as the attacker was creeping up. So really, the fox saved my life!"

Foxy business aside, the survivalist experience gave Roe an invaluable insight

into his character from *The 5th Wave*, and into the world in which his character lives.

The film is an adaptation of Rick Yancey's hit novel, published in 2013, which spent almost six months on *The New York Times* bestseller list. The tale focuses on a young girl, Cassie Sullivan (Chloë Grace Moretz), who is bidding to survive in a world that has been decimated by four waves of disaster. These are huge, Earth-shattering events, from tidal waves to pestilence, which are unleashed upon the planet by the 'Others', a force that bids to conquer the planet. A fifth wave now looms.

Among the wreckage, as one of Earth's last survivors, Cassie must fight to save herself and her brother. She teams up with Evan, who may be her final hope – if she can learn to trust him. Trust, according to Roe, is one of the key themes in the film.

"Evan Walker is definitely conflicted. He's a real contradiction," says the actor. "All of us are contradictions to some extent, but he's a contradiction in a really extreme way. His whole view on life is completely turned upside down when he meets Cassie."

"That makes it sound like it's about a romance between them, but it's really not. They don't trust each other at all. They don't give in to any of the feelings two human beings in a normal situation might."

The film is brought to life by J Blakeson, who tackles his first blockbuster movie after enjoying critical success with his low-budget ➤





# BIG MOVIE

The 5th Wave

➤kidnap thriller *The Disappearance Of Alice Creed*. Former *Spider-Man* star Tobey Maguire, meanwhile, produces.

"The idea that the invasion happens in waves in order to pick apart civilisation felt both unique and relatable," says Maguire of his decision to bring Yancey's novel to life. The book is the first in a trilogy. "The loss of electricity, disease, earthquakes, tsunamis — these are fears that are part of modern life right now," he continues. "That immediately sets it apart from a lot of science-fiction fantasy."

The link to real-life disasters excited Blakeson too. "I wanted to make this movie because it allows us to create this big-concept alien invasion and then use it to tell a story about the emotions and problems of everyday life," says the director, who also wrote the screenplay for *The Descent: Part 2*.

"It was very important to me that this film was not about how terrible the world is, but how beautiful it is and how you want to hold onto that beauty. My pitch was for Cassie to have hope and endurance."

To play Cassie, Maguire and Blakeson turned to American actress Chloë Grace Moretz, who has already demonstrated her genre chops with a pair of *Kick-Ass* movies, the English-language adaptation of *Let Me In*, *Dark Shadows* and the remakes of both *The Amityville Horror* and *Carrie*.

"I often play the extraordinary teenager who is facing some kind of fantastic situation, so it is nice to play a character closer to home; someone who has some real human aspects to them," says Moretz.

"Cassie is a very typical, ordinary girl, nothing too special," she adds. "She doesn't excel at school and doesn't excel in sports. She doesn't have the hot boyfriend. She is a typical young girl, except when you put her in these extraordinary circumstances she becomes one of the strongest women I've ever portrayed in a film."

Like Roe, she says that trust is a key theme. "Cassie is really affected by the fact that she can't really be sure who she can trust. She would like to trust people, but she soon learns that she is always betrayed or let down. She learns that the only person she can trust is herself."

Indeed, Cassie endures a rough ride. Her mother dies in the third wave — a deadly virus that sweeps the globe — while the enigmatic Colonel Vosch kills her father. When her little brother, Sammy, is taken away to a military training site, Camp Haven, she eventually teams up with Walker and travels to the base in a bid to find him. When she gets there, she meets her old high-school crush Ben Parish (Nick Robinson).

Camp Haven is run by Colonel Vosch, who is brought to life on screen by Liev

By the start of *The 5th Wave*, Earth's population has been decimated.



Liev Schreiber takes on antagonistic duties as Colonel Vosch.

## KICKING ASS Chloë Grace Moretz on playing Cassie

**Having four brothers of your own, could you relate to the brother-sister angle?**

I could, yeah. That was one of the things I gravitated towards when I read the book. This isn't a love story, a love triangle or a story about whether or not Cassie wants to kiss that guy or the other guy. This is a love story between a brother and a sister who are fighting for each other to live, to survive, to exist. That's at the basis of this sci-fi story; it's a true human love story between members of a family.

**Did you learn any new skills on this movie?**

Actually, the funny thing with this movie is that usually I train so much, and am always learning something new. But then, on this film, I had to revoke everything I had been trained for because I'm just a young girl who's a typical teenager with no training in anything. So when I'm walking around with this big M16 [assault rifle] around my neck, my character would be afraid of it. So I need to fumble with it and not really know what I'm doing.

**So you liked the fact that Cassie is just an ordinary girl?**

Yeah, it's nice to see those ordinary characters. I mean, it's out of the realms of possibility as an audience member when you go in and see the superhero, or the girl who's amazing at this or that. It's just not realistic. None of us are that special. All the roles I choose typically have a strong message for women, and aren't roles that perpetuate outdated stereotypes.

**Do you think you'd act like Cassie in this situation?**

You never know what you're going to be when that moment hits, but you obviously hope you're going to be the strong one leading the pack and saving everyone. You hope that you'll be able to be heroic, but sometimes you're not. You never know!

Schreiber. The American is a big sci-fi fan, being an avid reader of Ray Bradbury and Isaac Asimov, and says that it was Maguire who turned him onto the project.

"Tobey did a little bit of a *Godfather* on me," laughs Schreiber. "He mumbled like Marlon Brando and said that I had to do this for him or I'd get a horse's head in my bed."

In truth, Schreiber and Maguire went head-to-head across the chessboard in the 2014 thriller *Pawn Sacrifice* and became firm friends. Maguire knew that Schreiber had an interest in sci-fi, and used that knowledge in his recruitment drive. "Tobey pitched the story as science fiction," Schreiber says. "He knows I've always been a sucker for the genre. I get drawn into sci-fi movies."

"Like all the great science fiction, *The 5th Wave* really has nothing to do with beings from outer space," he adds. "It's always some projection, fantasy or question about ourselves that we want to use the genre for, and *The 5th Wave* fits into that tradition."

"The film tries to look at some of these 'what if' scenarios, and it demonstrates how we might manage to overcome them, which is something distinctly human. For me, essentially that is the theme and the heart of the film. Humans are a bit like cockroaches in that we're very hard to wipe out. There's something encouraging about that."

*The 5th Wave* is out on 22 January.

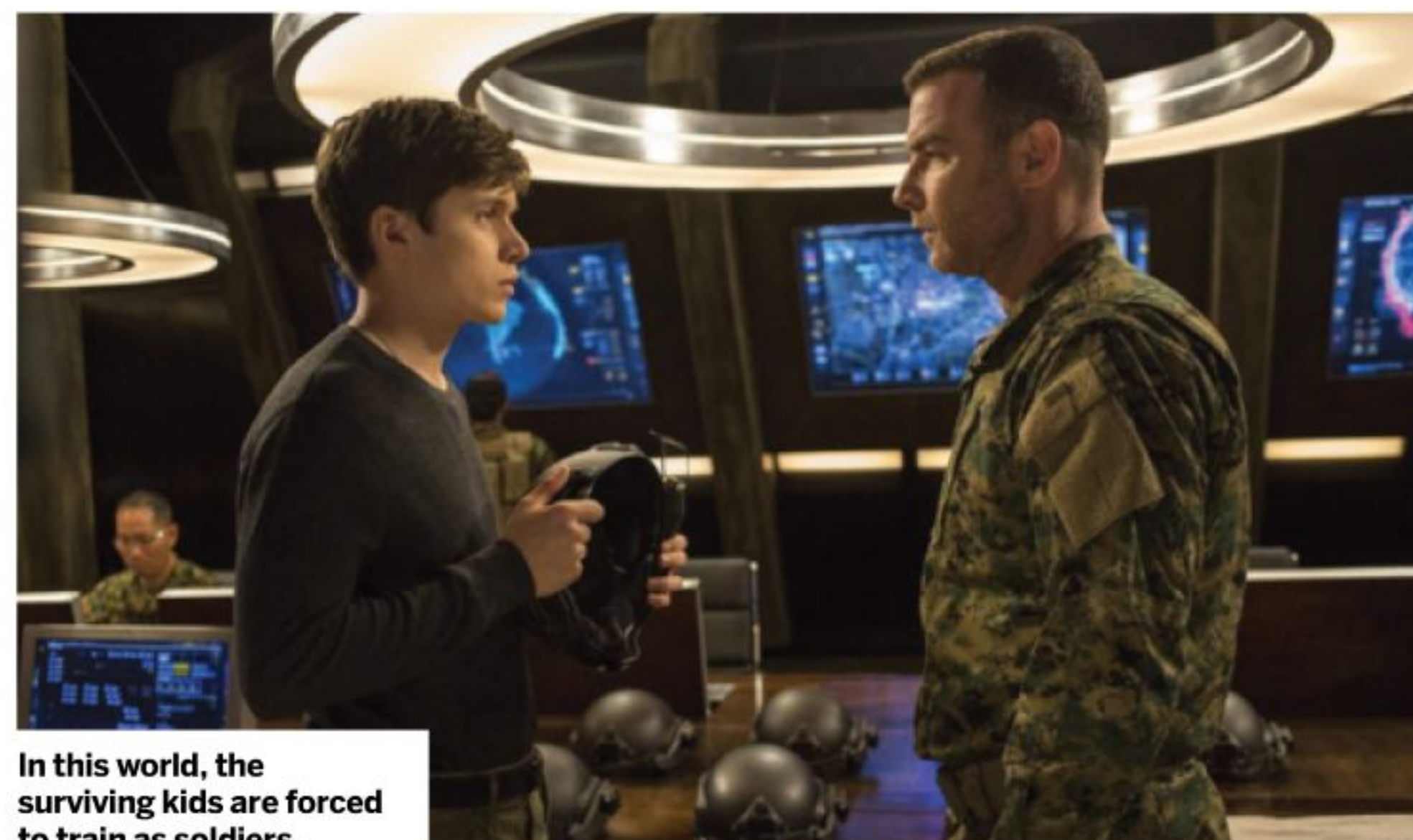




**CASSIE BECOMES ONE OF THE STRONGEST WOMEN I'VE EVER PORTRAYED IN A FILM**  
CHLOË GRACE MORETZ

## THE 5TH WAVE

World Wide Wave



In this world, the surviving kids are forced to train as soldiers.



Cassie (Moretz) with fellow survivor Evan (Alex Roe).

## MAKING WAVES

How did we get to where we are now?



### Third wave

**Threat:** Pestilence  
**Effect:** A virus is released using birds as carriers that resembles an advanced form of Ebola and causes victims to slowly bleed to death.  
**Death toll:** 97% of survivors

### First wave

**Threat:** The Surge  
**Effect:** An EMP wave is released, wiping out electronics and shorting out all moving vehicles, including mid-flight planes.  
**Death toll:** 500,000

### Second wave

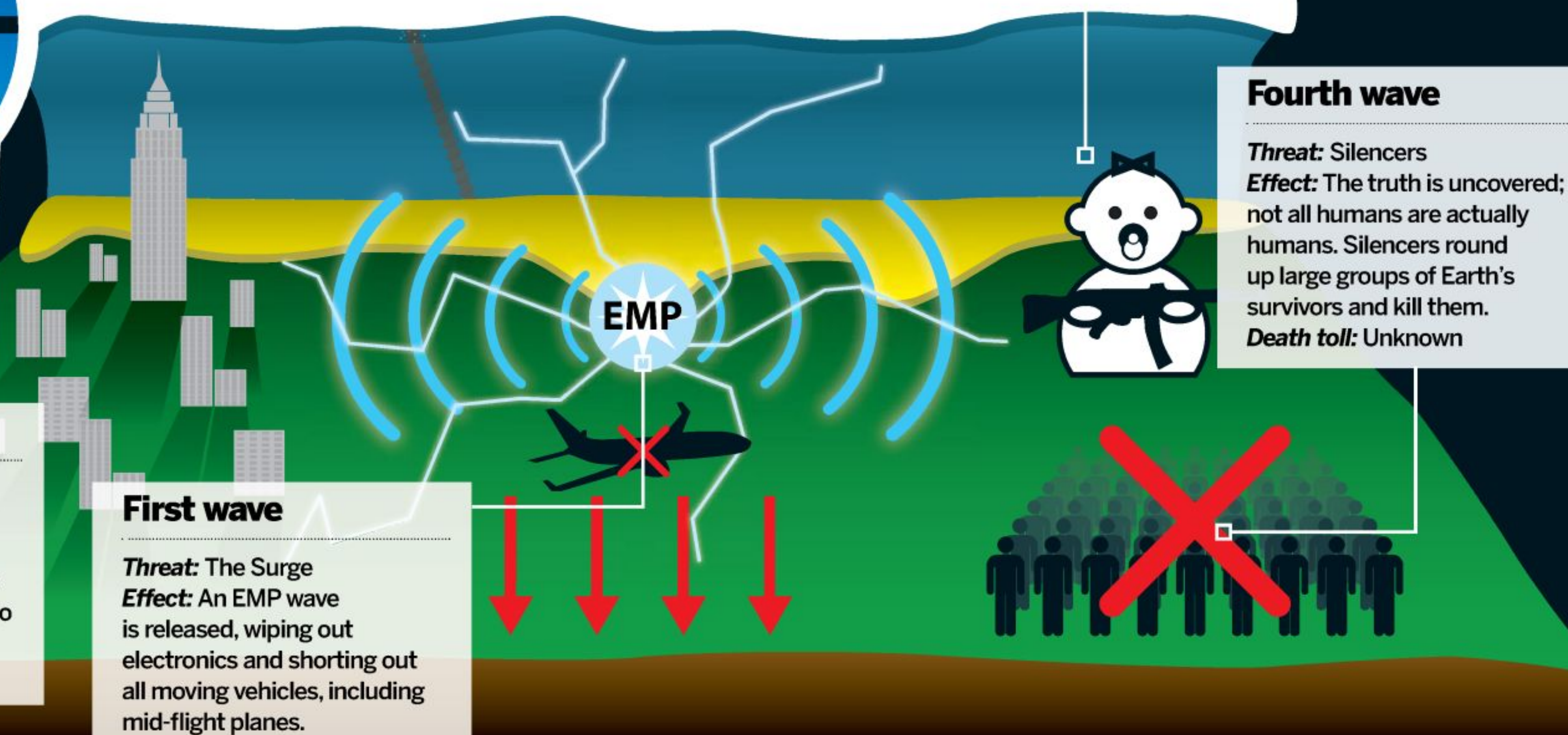
**Threat:** Surf's Up  
**Effect:** Enormous rods twice as tall as the Empire State Building are dropped onto the Earth's fault lines, causing devastating tsunamis.  
**Death toll:** 3 billion

### Fifth wave

**Threat:** Captured children  
**Effect:** Children are taken to a boot camp, issued weapons and expected to follow orders given by non-human commanding officers.  
**Death toll:** Ongoing

### Fourth wave

**Threat:** Silencers  
**Effect:** The truth is uncovered; not all humans are actually humans. Silencers round up large groups of Earth's survivors and kill them.  
**Death toll:** Unknown







# INVESTIGATION

Syfy Channel





# SYFY'S NEW CHAPTER

WHY THE SPECIALTY CHANNEL IS HOPING  
THAT SOME OF SCIENCE FICTION'S GREATEST  
NOVELS WILL HELP IT RETURN TO ITS ROOTS

SYFY CHANNEL  
Syfy's New Chapter



**F**IVE YEARS AGO, YOU'D HAVE BEEN HARD-PRESSED TO FIND DEDICATED SCIENCE FICTION FANS WHO HAD MANY GOOD WORDS TO SAY ABOUT SYFY. ON THE BACK

of its rebranding, the station formerly known as the Sci-Fi Channel seemed to be making it obvious that the genre it used to be named after was no longer its bag. As if the subtle spelling change wasn't indicative enough, Syfy cancelled *Caprica* and *Stargate Universe*, and appeared to be more interested in wrestling, unscripted series and a stream of daft *Sharknado* sequels. Many of these might have been fun in their own way, but they were a far cry from the kind of material on which the channel originally built its fanbase.

Syfy has got the message though, and is trying to prove that it's still the television channel that takes science fiction shows seriously by adapting of some of the genre's greatest novels.

This ambitious endeavour got off to a promising start at the end of 2015 with the well-received North American premiere of *Childhood's End*. Based on the 1953 novel of the same name by Arthur C Clarke, Syfy's three-part miniseries begins with a V-like vision of aliens arriving in the skies above the world's major cities. Later, there is a reference to M Night Shyamalan's *Signs*. Yet, as you might expect from a book by the author of *2001: A Space Odyssey*, what looks ostensibly like an alien-invasion story doesn't follow the usual formula.

"It's not about fighting them; it's a conversation between humanity and the superior intelligence that may or may not be here to hurt us," explains *Doctor Who* and *Life On Mars* alumnus Matthew Graham, who wrote the script for *Childhood's End*. "We don't know, they don't know, no one knows for sure, but all the signs point to them being benevolent and omniscient."

Graham's description is apt, because Syfy's version of *Childhood's End* puts more emphasis on ideas than action. Although his script takes liberties with the source material, it doesn't overlook uncomfortable questions raised in the book about what has driven some of our greatest artistic and scientific achievements. "We're trying to hang on to the philosophical aspect of real science fiction, as opposed to laser guns," explains Graham. "It's not a wham-bam action-type piece; it is trying to honour its literary roots."

In other words, Syfy has made a show for people who will pay attention rather than just vegetate in front of formulaic game shows and fake sports. That's exactly the kind of programming disgruntled viewers say they expect to see on the channel that has chosen 'Imagine Greater' as its slogan.

"Syfy is in kind of a phase-change right now," says Daniel Abraham, who co- ➤





# INVESTIGATION

Syfy Channel

➤ wrote *The Expanse*, a series of novels on which Syfy has based another of its new literary adaptations. “They’ve really started refocusing on their core mission.”

Syfy has announced a ten-episode commitment to *The Expanse*, but because the ongoing book series has already run to five novels and several novellas, it’s no surprise that there has been talk of more if the show succeeds.

“Daniel or I have been in the writing team since the very beginning, working with Mark [Fergus], Hawk [Ostby] and Naren Shankar on beating out the story even before the staff writers were hired,” says Ty Franck, who co-authored *The Expanse* with Abraham under the pen-name of James SA Corey. “Daniel and I also wrote a script for the first season, and have been asked to write again for the second season.”

Set around 200 years after humanity has begun migrating into space and against a backdrop of interplanetary instability, *The Expanse* begins when a missing person’s case is assigned to a detective named Miller (played by Thomas Jane), who is stationed on Ceres. At the same time, an ice-gathering vessel far out in the Solar System receives a distress call from a ship that the woman Miller is looking for might have been hiding on. From here, *The Expanse* unfolds into a conspiracy thriller situated in a complex, speculative vision of the future that ultimately stretches beyond the boundaries of known space. Syfy’s president, David Howe, has described it as the channel’s “most ambitious series ever”, and given the scope of the mythology Abraham and Franck have created, that’s not hyperbole.

“We were approached by several folks who were interested in picking up the option to the books,” explains Abraham. “Some of the offers were pretty standard boilerplate stuff, but a few of them had really interesting, intelligent folks attached. Syfy was only one of several suitors, but they were the ones that shared the vision and a passion for the project. Plus, they threw a lot of money at it.”

*Leviathan Wakes*, the first book in *The Expanse*, was nominated for a Hugo Award, which is indication enough that Syfy now has its sights set on something smarter than B-grade movies about bad weather and big fish. There are risks involved in trying to leverage off the reputation of sci-fi’s top books, though, because big ideas don’t always translate well from the page to the screen.

“It’s a very different toolbox for storytelling,” Abraham says. “For example, Miller’s a very quiet, introspective character in the books. He spends a lot of time in his own head. That’s really difficult to film. Also, exposition’s really easy to do in prose, and doesn’t work at all in filmed work. We

**“SYFY IS IN A PHASE CHANGE RIGHT NOW... THEY HAVE STARTED FOCUSING ON THEIR CORE MISSION”**  
**DANIEL ABRAHAM**



Arthur C Clarke’s book puts a price on utopia.



Under The Dome’s Mike Vogel plays Ricky Stormgren in *Childhood’s End*.



In *Childhood’s End*, there’s good news and bad news about humanity’s future.

had to find ways to achieve effects on the screen that were similar to the ones we had in the books.”

Adapting epic sci-fi novels like *The Expanse* for the small screen isn’t uncharted space for Syfy. The miniseries of Frank Herbert’s *Dune* (2000) and *Children of Dune* (2003) were among the highest-rated shows to air on the channel before it was rebranded. Yet, neither of these productions is on a par with what *The Expanse* could become if it finds an audience. Moreover, Syfy is taking an even bigger commercial risk with its upcoming production of Arthur C Clarke’s *3001: The Final Odyssey*, which, according to the channel’s own summary, will include “dark thematic meditations on the final fate of all Humankind.”

It’s hardly a coincidence that Syfy is tackling tough-to-translate novels such as *3001* at a time when humanity’s fate looks anything but certain. Clarke’s books are classic examples of science fiction projecting the contemporary zeitgeist, and many of the sociopolitical issues and anxieties reflected in his stories still resonate today.





*The Expanse* has been described as the new *Battlestar Galactica*.



Former Punisher Thomas Jane (right) plays Detective Miller.

That is particularly true of *Childhood's End*, according to Graham.

"In 1950, we were coming out of a very brutal war and a very expensive one. No change there. We were entering an age of austerity. No change there. We were terrified by the Cold War. That potentially is rearing up again. And substitute any fear that they had in 1952 to the fears that we have now coming out of the Middle East, and you've got the same paranoia that they were facing. The relevance I think is not changed one iota."

Aside from making us think about where we might be going wrong, however, science fiction novelists have also been a source of reassurance that our species has the potential to secure a bright future. It's a message of hope that Abraham wants viewers to take away from *The Expanse*.

"I think compelling visions of what humanity might be able to reach for have a great track record for inspiring science and technology and, to an extent, social change. My daughter's nine years old right now, and I'm watching classic *Star Trek* with

her. Communicators were pure fantasy then, but I've got one in my pocket that's better than anything Kirk had. I think it's fair to argue that science fiction shapes the imagination of what's possible, and the imagination of what's possible shapes the world."

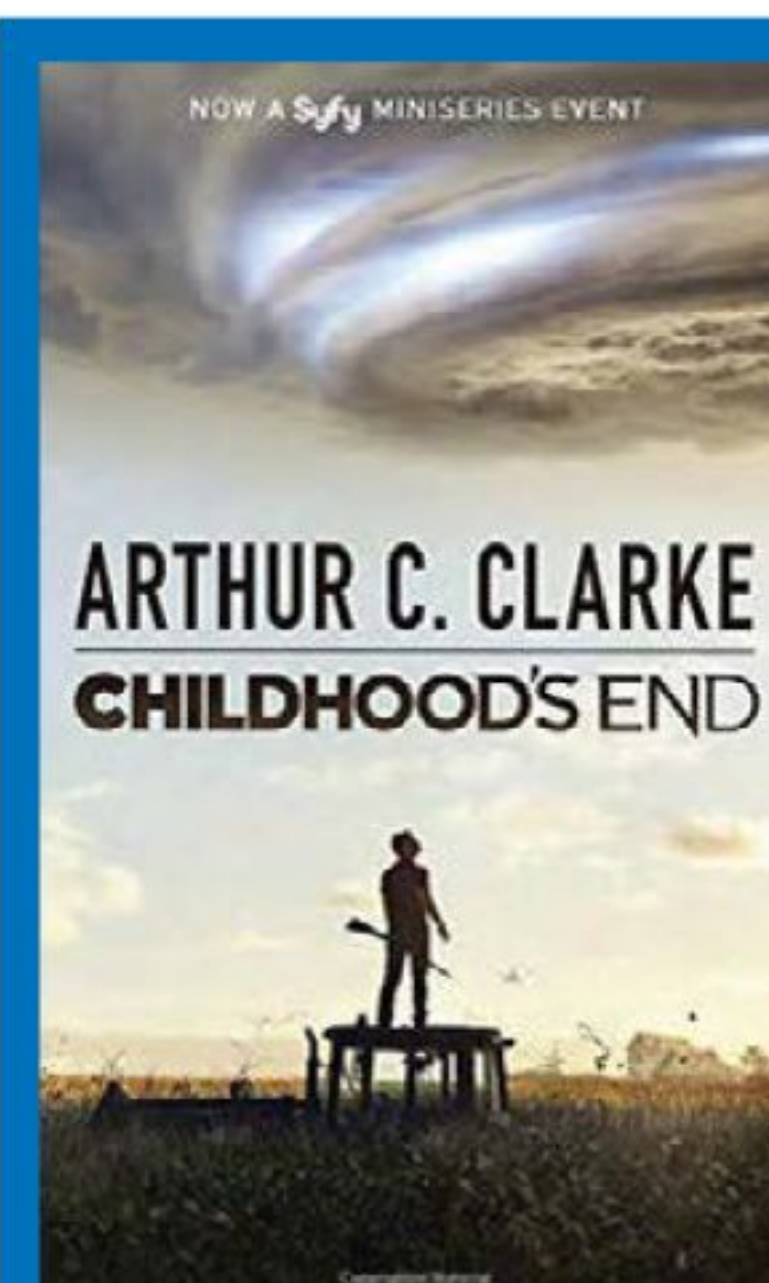
When it comes to giving credit for recognising the intellectual and inspirational content of the books that Syfy is bringing to the screen, its decision makers deserve the benefit of the doubt. Nevertheless, it would be naïve to think that they didn't also feel an awakening of mainstream interest in science fiction after Disney announced plans to open up the *Star Wars* universe. If the hype is anything to go by, everyone in the world will have seen *The Force Awakens* by now. Therefore, it stands to reason that plenty of people will now be receptive to TV shows featuring aliens and giant spacecraft. So much has already been suggested by Syfy's acquisition of *Dark Matter* and *Killjoys*. What's more, JJ Abrams' *Star Wars* movie is only the latest in a string of recent science fiction blockbusters.

"You look back at the last couple years and we've had *Interstellar*, *Jupiter Ascending* and *Gravity*," Abraham says. "A lot of the big SF stories have been in features, though, because the cost of doing them on television... well, it ain't cheap. I don't know that anyone's really tried it on the scale or budget of *The Expanse*. That, I think, has to do with the way television viewing is changing. With streaming and online viewerships, making a ten-hour epic movie becomes a viable idea."

Abraham's point about streaming media services like Netflix might seem counter-intuitive, because the common argument is that they encourage people to stop paying for Syfy and other cable and satellite services. On the other hand, the popularity of on-demand viewing makes the commissioning of serialised shows like *The Expanse* a more attractive proposition.

Hence, with the growth in streaming, and more *Star Wars*, *Star Trek* and *Guardians Of The Galaxy* films on the horizon, as well as Syfy's series based on Frederik Pohl's *Gateway*, HBO's adaptation of Asimov's *Foundation* saga and several other mooted book adaptations, there are good reasons to predict that audiences won't tire of science fiction on screen any time soon. If that's true, five years from now Syfy might have wrestled back those viewers that threatened to desert it when it favoured SmackDowns over space operas, and be winning over a new generation of fans by proving that geek literature can be good for business.

*Childhood's End* and *The Expanse* will both air on Syfy UK later in 2016.



## Growing pains

### Writer Matthew Graham on *Childhood's End*'s unique premise

**How did you become involved in this project?**

I went for a meet-and-greet with one of the producers, Mike De Luca, and he brought the book up from behind his desk and said, "Do you know this book?" I said, "Yes, I love the book. I read it as a teenager." And he said, "Well, Syfy has asked me to bring it to TV as a miniseries. Do you want to do it?" I said, "Yes." I had to jump through a few hoops for Syfy and the studio and talk to them at length about my take on it, but that's how I got involved.

**The book has inspired many an alien invasion-themed TV shows and movies. What makes it different from those?**

The game we're playing with is hopefully a relatively subtle one. It's not, "Oh, they're here to help us, but oh, look, behind closed doors they're cackling and rubbing their claws together and they've clearly got a scary plan." It's more about how we perceive them. They don't change; they stay pretty true to themselves in that they are here to help us. It's about a dialogue between human and aliens rather than that they're trying to take our bodies over and grow them in pods or something. That is what is so different about it.

**How would you describe the three-part miniseries?**

The first night is *The Day The Earth Stood Still*, the second night is more *Rosemary's Baby*, and the third night is more like *Titanic*. They are three different movies with three different vibes, and that's something that doesn't normally happen in TV.





## MUST-SEE TV

The Shannara Chronicles

# SHANNARA: THE JOURNEY BEGINS

MTV'S BIG-BUDGET ADAPTATION OF TERRY BROOKS' FANTASY SERIES PROMISES TO BE ONE OF TV'S MOST AMBITIOUS UNDERTAKINGS. WE GO BEHIND THE SCENES WITH THE CAST AND CREW OF THE SHANNARA CHRONICLES...

WORDS EDWARD GROSS

**T**HE SHANNARA CHRONICLES, PRODUCED BY MTV AND BASED ON THE BOOK SERIES BEGUN BY AUTHOR TERRY BROOKS IN 1977, MELTS BIG-SCOPE MOVIE-MAKING WITH

the intimacy of the television medium's ability to delve into and explore characters. It's executive-produced by Jon Favreau (*Iron Man*), Dan Farah (*Ready Player One*) and showrunners Al Gough and Miles Millar (*Smallville*) – what's not to get excited about?

The setting is a futuristic take on our world called The Four Lands, and an approach that blends magic and primitive technology. The ten-episode first season is based on second book *The Elfstones Of Shannara*, which follows a quest to create a new Ellcrys, a magical tree that serves to banish all demons from the Four Lands. To do this, a specific place in the Four Lands called Safehold must be found. At the same time, the Elven army and their allies must slow down a demon invasion made possible by the dying of the current Ellcrys in order for the quest to be fulfilled. Here are the things that make it stand out...

### 1. REMAINING TRUE TO THE WORLD

In the beginning there was the word, and that word was provided by Terry Brooks, an English major who did his senior thesis on the generational stories of William Faulkner; stories that covered the span of decades and during which various generations came and went. "I coupled my love for big, sprawling generational sagas with the Tolkien format of *The Lord Of The Rings*," he says. "That's where the *Shannara* series was born."

Executive producer Dan Farah believes that the TV landscape began to change in early 2012, thanks partially to *Game Of* ➤





# THE SHANNARA CHRONICLES

The Journey Begins







# MUST-SEE TV

The Shannara Chronicles

## Creative Dream Teams

When two heads are better than one...



### Alfred Gough and Miles Millar

The duo responsible for bringing *The Shannara Chronicles* to MTV previously struck gold with *Smallville*. Their other efforts include *Into The Badlands* and, most impressively, *Spider-Man 2*.



### David Benioff and DB Weiss

Benioff and Weiss had previously tried to collaborate on a movie of *Ender's Game* that never came to pass. They're best known for working as a team while bringing *Game Of Thrones* to life on HBO.



### Simon Pegg and Edgar Wright

They discovered they were kindred spirits on *Spaced*, and created the brilliant *Shaun Of The Dead* before completing the *Cornetto* trilogy with *Hot Fuzz* and *The World's End*.



### Alex Kurtzman and Roberto Orci

There's no denying the impact the writing duo has had on the genre over the last few years: *Transformers*, *Star Trek*, *The Amazing Spider-Man 2*, *Alias*, *Sleepy Hollow* – the list goes on.



### Joe and Anthony Russo

The brothers collaborated on *Welcome To Collinwood* back in 2002, and after some TV work (*Community*!) they directed both *Captain America: The Winter Soldier* and *Civil War*, and are pencilled in for *Infinity War*.

© Gage Skidmore, Maimai8

## TERRY BROOKS IS AN OLD-FASHIONED – IN THE BEST SENSE OF THE WORD – STORYTELLER. IT FEELS MORE LIKE STAR WARS THAN LORD OF THE RINGS TO ME

AL GOUGH

➤ *Thrones*, which demonstrated the types of shows that could be attempted. “One of the hurdles of adapting *Shannara* had been figuring out how to trim it down to an hour-and-a-half or a two-hour movie when there was so much great story and world to explore,” he explains. “When TV started changing, Terry and I started talking about doing it as a TV show, so instead of trying to turn one of his books into a movie, you would have 10-12 hours to play with. He got really excited about that, and he gave me the TV rights to see if I could put it together. Which is what I did.”

What they found inherent in the novels was a storytelling structure that lent itself perfectly to the television medium. “What was great about *Shannara*,” says Al Gough, “is that Terry is a real old-fashioned – in the best sense of the word – storyteller. The story had a real pace to it, and it just had a great world, which you hadn't seen in fantasy, which is our world in the future. The way Terry tells stories, it felt more *Star Wars* than *Lord Of The Rings* to me. If you think back, *Star Wars* was pitched as a princess, a farm boy, a rogue and knights taking on an evil empire. It was a space fantasy. This one, when we read it, we recognised as a great story, and we could totally see it as a ten-hour first season of a show.”

Elaborates Miles Millar, “We were given the books, read them, and both Al and I loved it in terms of its potential. One, there were really interesting characters, particularly female characters in this book, *The Elfstones Of Shannara*, and the story really would make a complete season. It had a great start and a great ending. As a writer, it's always nice to have that foundation.”

“I tell Terry, ‘You wrote this book 30-some years ago, and you have all the key ingredients,’ which are strong female characters and a triangle in the middle of it, which is something you don't see in fantasy very often between two girls and a boy,” Gough notes. “On top of that, you have this world, which is our world in the future, so it gives it a science fiction kind of bent as well, which is really cool. And then you have a horror element with these demons that are attacking, which gives it an edge. *Elfstones Of Shannara* has just the right ingredients.”

For his part, Brooks feels that the novel is about responsibility for yourself and others, and how far you're willing to take responsibility for what you know is right. Muses the author, “You're the little man, you have no chance, but you somehow find the

strength to do what you have to do. That's all part and parcel of the story. And I wanted some kind of an epic battle, so that became part of it, too.”

Key to developing the series was keeping Brooks continually involved. “As the author,” says Farah, “Terry is an invaluable source of information and perspective.”

“At the same time,” Millar adds, “Terry provided us with flexibility that we could change what we needed to change and make our own in many ways, while we remain respectful to the source story, his characters and all those others things. So it was actually a really good collaboration with him.”

Emotionally, Brooks was able to let go because he felt he had written the book so many years ago. As a result, “I can be excited about the adaptation without being critical. That's what I was able to do mostly, because there wasn't anything about it that I found troubling or a violation of the trust that my readers put in me to see that the show is carried out the right way.”

## 2. A NEW GENERATION OF PERFORMERS (WITH SOME VETERANS FOR GOOD MEASURE)

The importance of the casting of *The Shannara Chronicles* cannot be underestimated. The success of the show will rise and fall on its characters, as they are the ones who will or will not draw the audience back week after week. Cast members include Austin Butler (*Arrow*) as Wil Ohmsford; Poppy Drayton (*When Calls The Heart*) as Emberle; Ivana Baquero (*Pan's Labyrinth*) as Eritrea; Manu Bennett (*Arrow*) as Allanon, and John Rhys-Davies (*The Lord Of The Rings*) as King Elesedil.

Details Brooks of who's who, “Wil Ohmsford, who is the child of the hero of the first book [*The Sword Of Shannara*], is the main lead, and there are two women: one is an Elvin princess, part of the Elesedil family, named Amberle; and Eritrea is a ‘rover’ [nomadic] girl who has an important role in what happens in the story. Those are the three main ones. And then there's the druid, Allanon, from the first book; and King Elesedil, among others.”

“Wil is a farm boy who has never been more than five miles outside of his little village,” says Austin Butler. “In the beginning of the story, all he can think about is protecting his mum, who's very sick. He thinks that his place in the world is to become a healer, and that's what will give him security. While he's on a journey to go become a healer, he gets pulled off of that





journey by Allanon, this druid, who says, 'Your ancestors were kings and warriors,' but Wil doesn't feel that way. In a sense, his responsibility is to save the world, and he gets sent on this quest to save the world with the princess. That's the story."

Of her character, Princess Amberle, Poppy Drayton offers, "She's the Princess of Aborlon, and basically discovers pretty early on that she has this overwhelming responsibility to try and save the Four Lands. It's all about her discovering this and then coming to terms with this huge weight of responsibility that's just been dumped on her shoulders."

"Eretria," says her actress, Ivana Baquero, "is one of the few humans that exist in the Four Lands, because it takes place in an apocalyptic world where most humans have already been extinguished. I'm from a rover clan, and rovers are a nomadic group



Poppy Drayton as the elven Amberle Elesedil.

of thieves that rove around the Four Lands stealing and being a bit naughty, so they have a really bad reputation. She comes from a very abusive background – a very dark background – but everything starts to change for her the moment she meets Wil and Amberle. From that moment on, her horizon suddenly opens and she starts doubting everything she's ever known. Her journey in the show is so much fun to play, because she's such a badass, but she's got such a big heart too."

"From an acting perspective," considers Manu Bennett, "your career path is governed by how fortunate you are to work with the higher-rank production people, whether it be the producers or the people who are in the practical and artistic world, our job is to get in there and act. You can put me in a student movie or a student film, and I'll go in and do the best acting I can. But when you're standing with people like Peter Jackson or working with Warner Bros with *Arrow*, or in this environment now with *Shannara*, it's pretty incredible."

Considering his credits, there's something ironic in the words of John Rhys-Davies when he expresses that he's not a fan of fantasy, but finds himself drawn more into the world of sci-fi. "I was a little leery about this," he admits, "but it won me over. When you do a show, you think, 'If I was producing it, I wouldn't have done that.' 'Oh really? That's an odd choice.' 'It's weak casting there.' 'Please, somebody direct him there.' With this, I kept thinking to myself, 'There

is no call that's been made on this show so far that I would second-guess.' That's an enormous tribute to the producers. They have done their homework. I'd say that in the short time I was over there, which was a little over a week, watching them film and talking to the crew and talking to the people that weren't actually on the acting side of things, that I heard over and over again how helpful everybody was, and what good camaraderie there was between the actors. I have a feeling that's not always true."

### 3. WORLD BUILDING

Recognising what has been accomplished in the world of fantasy, with *The Lord Of The Rings* and *The Hobbit* representing the former and *Game Of Thrones* the latter, the creative crew was determined to push the boundaries of the medium.

"When I entered the project," offers director Jonathan Liebesman, whose credits include *Wrath Of The Titans* and *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*, "I really wanted it to have the scope and DNA of something like *Lord Of The Rings*, and so the challenge is to get to go to New Zealand to make sure the visual effects look top notch, and make sure the size of the visuals are satisfying, and then to counterpoint it with the depth of characters that Al and Miles write. The real challenge is to have the juxtaposition of humongous scope, but extremely intimate storytelling and character."

"There's a reason we shoot *The Shannara Chronicles* in New Zealand," adds Gough. ➡

## Creature Feature

### How the Changeling was created

As far as visual effects supervisor Trent Smith is concerned, one of the biggest challenges in the first episode of *The Shannara Chronicles* went into a changeling character that plays an integral role in unfolding events.

"It's easy to describe a shape-shifting creature," says Smith, whose credits include *Smallville*, *The Vampire Diaries* and *The 100*, "but to actually create that and get a visual out of it so people can see it was very challenging. Not only did we want it to be something frightening, but we also wanted it to be something very smart and intelligible. That whole story point in the series of that character going in and manipulating other people is so important that it's not just an animal. You have to have intelligence behind it, so coming up with something that feels frightening, but that you can believe had intelligence. Once you get past that: the structure of how this thing would shift back and forth into new creatures."

"We are going for everything at feature quality; to not just step back into the old television standard and make it simpler. We wanted a huge event and to see this creature in all its glory."

Austin Butler plays the young protagonist Wil Ohmsford.



By this point, humanity has mutated into different races.



Shannara is epic fantasy of the kind we haven't seen in a while.





# MUST-SEE TV

The Shannara Chronicles

## Shannara vs Lord Of The Rings

The cases where Tolkien's influence stands out

Terry Brooks has never made any secret about the fact that *Sword Of Shannara* was inspired by *The Lord Of The Rings*. Which is just as well, because there do seem to be several points of direct comparison, as you can see below...



### Allanon vs Gandalf

Druids are the Shannara wizard

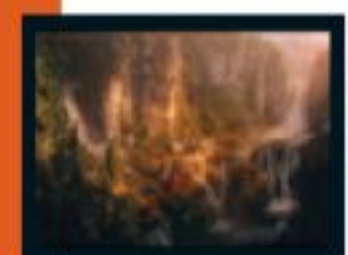
equivalent, and Allanon is our Gandalf; the older, wise guide who understands the oncoming danger better than anyone.



### Valemen vs Hobbits

The heroes of *Sword Of*

*Shannara* were the simple, peaceful Valemen, who bore more than a passing resemblance to the Hobbits.



### Elves vs Elves

Tolkien's elves were always ethereal and quite

unknowable. Brooks fully explored the society, power struggles and conflicts of both the Land and Air elves.



### The heroes vs The Fellowship

The line-up in

*Shannara* was nigh-on identical to the band of heroes that Tolkien wrote, with some differences.

"Part of it is because we want a good landscape, and part of it is because it actually makes the production doable and allows us to do so much more than we would be able to do if we were shooting it in California, Atlanta or New Orleans."

Concurs Millar, "Going to New Zealand, those landscapes also speak to something different, something otherworldly. We always talk about this show in the same way as *Star Wars*, that it's a mix of CG and practical effects that work together. It's all about giving it the time, the attention to detail, finding the right people and not settling that can distinguish it in terms of the TV shows that rush it or don't have the attention to detail or the ambition. 'It's just TV' is never our mantra."

"This is fantasy, but it's also science fiction, so everything has to have a slight futuristic edge," Gough interjects. "The Elvin palace looks like a palace, but has that futuristic edge; there's crystal technology. It's really looking for ways to distinguish the look and the visualisation of the show into production design so that it felt unique."

As a result of that desire, there were numerous conversations regarding set design, production design, the concept for the cities and the world itself. Muses Millar, "How do we create that? The wardrobe is fantasy, but it has a futuristic edge – and that's where we really took our lead."

Handling the wardrobe is Jane Holland (*30 Days Of Night*), who notes, "One of the places I started with was, 'What are the rules of the world?' Yes, we were projected into the future, but it's a world of no technology, so that really put us into defining the way that things might be made and what they might be made from. Everything has a kind of hand-made feeling rather than a manufactured feeling to it. Durability

was really important. The materials was one thing, but then creating the style was something that was a visual representation of the world, so I worked very much in conjunction with the production designer."

"When I sat down to work on this show," adds production designer, Robert Gillies (*Xena: The Warrior Princess*), "I started with the Ellcrys tree. At the centre of the story was this 5,000-year-old tree, which is almost like a character. So I put my point of the compass in place to get a feel for that and began drawing like a maniac. As a designer, you put it out there to the other guys, and then everyone can put their thoughts down about it and everything grows from there."

#### 4. EVOLVING IMAGE

One of the biggest factors in making *The Shannara Chronicles* stand out is the recognition by MTV that this could be a genuine game-changer for the network, altering its image for the next generation.

"MTV wanted to take a big swing," enthuses Gough, "and that's as big a part of this story as anything else. People see the trailer, and then MTV's logo pops up and they simply can't believe it."

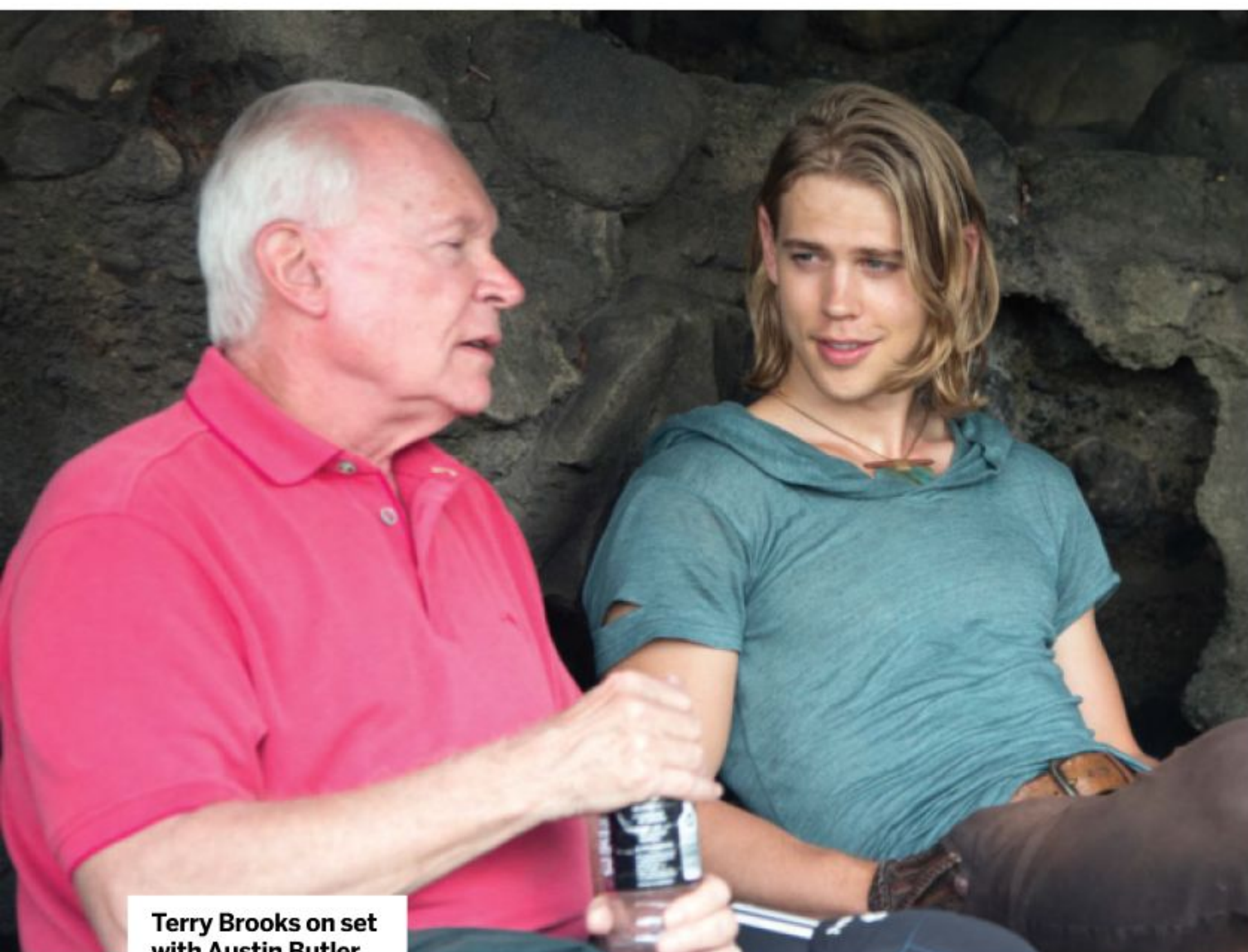
Further Farah, "One of the strengths of MTV is its ability to consistently reinvent

and stay connected to the ever-changing pop-culture zeitgeist. That's proven once again with *The Shannara Chronicles*, which is a truly epic fantasy event series with the biggest budget in [network history]."

Liebesman had a dual reaction when he realised what network was producing the show: hesitation, and then a realisation of the opportunity. "The hesitation," he proposes, "is MTV hasn't done this before. Will they get it? Then the realisation is the fact that because it hasn't been done, means it's an opportunity to have a partner that wants to change its brand. So maybe they'll go for it even more than another place that already thinks they know how to do it. Both of those go hand in hand."

According to Manu Bennett, is exactly what happened: "It's a whole different universe and world when you read a passage that says, 'They walk through the jungle and suddenly come across an opening, and through the opening they see the ruins of the Golden Gate Bridge. They're now in San Francisco.' You read that page and you have to ask yourself, 'Is this really television?'"

The *Shannara Chronicles* is currently airing on MTV in the US, with a UK air date to follow.



Terry Brooks on set with Austin Butler.



The *Lord Of The Rings* comparisons are hammered home by the presence of John Rhys-Davies

The events of *The Shannara Chronicles* take place thousands of years in the future.





"Generations clash, as well as religions, in this emotionally involving epic fantasy"

- *Publishers Weekly*



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## BIG MOVIE

Pride And Prejudice And Zombies



# Iron Maidens

DIRECTOR BURR STEERS  
ON MAKING JANE  
AUSTEN'S HEROINE  
A KUNG-FU-TRAINED  
MONSTER KILLER WITH  
PRIDE AND PREJUDICE  
AND ZOMBIES

WORDS JONATHAN HATFULL



# PRIDE AND PREJUDICE AND ZOMBIES

Iron Maidens



**W**E'RE RIGHT IN THE MIDDLE OF OSCAR-BAIT SEASON, SO IT'S NOT TOO MUCH OF A SURPRISE TO SEE A TRAILER OPEN WITH A BEAUTIFUL SHOT OF A pristine country estate, as a young Regency-era woman ponders society's expectations. We're just starting to nod off when a young lady is discovered chowing down a human face. Yes, this is *Pride And Prejudice And Zombies* – not quite the awards-season fodder we were expecting...

"Some like it cold!" laughs Burr Steers, the writer and director of the film based on Seth Grahame-Smith's novel, which took fairly drastic liberties with Jane Austen's classic. "They were calling it a rom-zom-com period piece, that idea of *Pride And Prejudice And Zombies* is a great hook."

Indeed, the novel's novel idea to fill Austen's masterpiece with the undead saw the book become a worldwide phenomenon and launched Grahame-Smith into a literary and movie career

(he has become Tim Burton's go-to guy), but the film adaptation has been spinning its wheels for years now. Directors like David O Russell and Mike White have come and gone, while original star Natalie Portman had to drop out (although she's still a producer on the movie). After several years of nearly coming together before falling apart, the film finally kicked into gear when Steers (*17 Again*) came on board.

"When I came to it, this project had been around for a while and there was another script. The movie had almost gotten made and then fallen apart at the last second... but it went in a very different direction," he explains. "I think it's typical. Projects get momentum, and then something derails them and everyone has incredibly full schedules and you can't get the cast back together again, you lose the budget to make it, things fall apart. And then it was which way to go with it. Do you go broad? *Shaun Of The Dead*'s a great

**"THE ZOMBIE STORY GETS MUCH BIGGER, BUT THE BEATS OF PRIDE AND PREJUDICE ARE THERE"**

BURR STEERS

and very funny movie, but do you go that direction, or do you go the other direction with it? Which in my case was putting more Austen in. Even for the interstitial scenes, I went into her other writings and pulled dialogue and lines."

Steers realised that the best way to make the most of the concept was really to fully embrace it. You don't need us to tell you that we're not exactly starved for zombies, and what makes *P&P&Z* stand out is that original iconic source material. "The idea was that you create this alternate Regency England, this alternate world where the zombie plague had happened, and then you do *Pride And Prejudice* in it," he explains. "In the way that someone would set *Richard III* in Nazi Germany. I pitched it, and I rewrote it very quickly initially, and I was stunned that it worked! It actually was something that tracked through the movie. There's a point where the zombie story gets much bigger and it veers off, but ➤



# BIG MOVIE

Pride And Prejudice And Zomb

ultimately the beats of *Pride And Prejudice*, the romance, are all there between Darcy and Liz. And that from my standpoint was just common sense, that *Pride And Prejudice* always, always works. Even in a zombie movie."

So we still have Lizzie Bennet (Lily James) refusing to alter her character for the purposes of finding a husband, realising that the right man wouldn't ask her to, and the handsome Mr Darcy (Sam Riley), whose standoffish manner and snobbery hides a gentler soul than he's letting on. There's just the simple fact that they're both really very good at dismembering the walking dead. Steers tells us that keeping the timeless love story was absolutely crucial for the film to work. So it's still

## "ALL THE ACTORS APPROACHED IT SERIOUSLY, WHICH IS WHERE THE BEST COMEDY COMES OUT"

BURR STEERS

a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife?

"Absolutely. Everything that's happening with the zombies and this plague happening is really the backdrop, and the love story is what you invest in. And being true to those characters was something that was just great fun too. The mantra for the movie, the big wink, was that there was no wink. We were playing it straight, which made it hopefully even funnier. I wasn't hugely into mash-ups, but this one made sense because you could take, in *Pride And Prejudice*, well all Jane Austen you have the Napoleonic Wars, which are never explained, and you could just pull that out and stick in the zombie story, zombie plague in [this] case that started 80 years before, and they're still just living with that stiff upper lip English way. Nobody's really feeling overly sorry for themselves, it's just the reality of their world."

Of course, they're not just fighting the oncoming zombie hordes with stiff upper lips. Readers of the book will remember Mr Bennet (Charles Dance) instructing his daughters to form a "Pentagram of death!" and the Bennet sisters will most definitely be offing their undead foes with as much style as possible. "I was thinking in terms of the Seven Samurai, that each of the sisters' fighting styles would be connected to

A lady must be ready for battle at all times, so the sisters tool up.

their characters," he explains. "And all the actresses trained beforehand, they didn't have kung fu at their drama schools! They had kung fu training."

But what about the pesky living dead? Rather than simply go for the brain-dead brain-eaters of *The Walking Dead*, or the sprinting rage-monsters of Danny Boyle's *28 Days Later* (which Steers picks out as his favourite zombie movie), the filmmaker decided to give his undead a bit more personality to make them a more complex threat.

"It was more like *I Am Legend*, to make them more formidable," he remembers of his inspiration. "It wasn't just these mindless undead wandering around waiting to be decapitated; they still retain some of who they were as humans, but they had become arch enemies. They've also evolved to the point where they can pass as the living, if they weren't bitten on the face, they can pass among us. They would have the same accent. One thing that was very much on my mind was all the English people that were going over to fight for ISIS, and you'd hear this very London accent coming from ISIS members, and the idea that you couldn't profile zombies anymore."

Profiling the English upper crust proved to be a lot easier, as Steers realised when the crew hit their locations. "We used all the great estates in England, and it was great fun to go in there," he laughs. "Invariably, with all these estates the family has been reduced to an apartment somewhere over the garage or



The great Charles Dance is proud of his badass daughters as Mr Bennet.

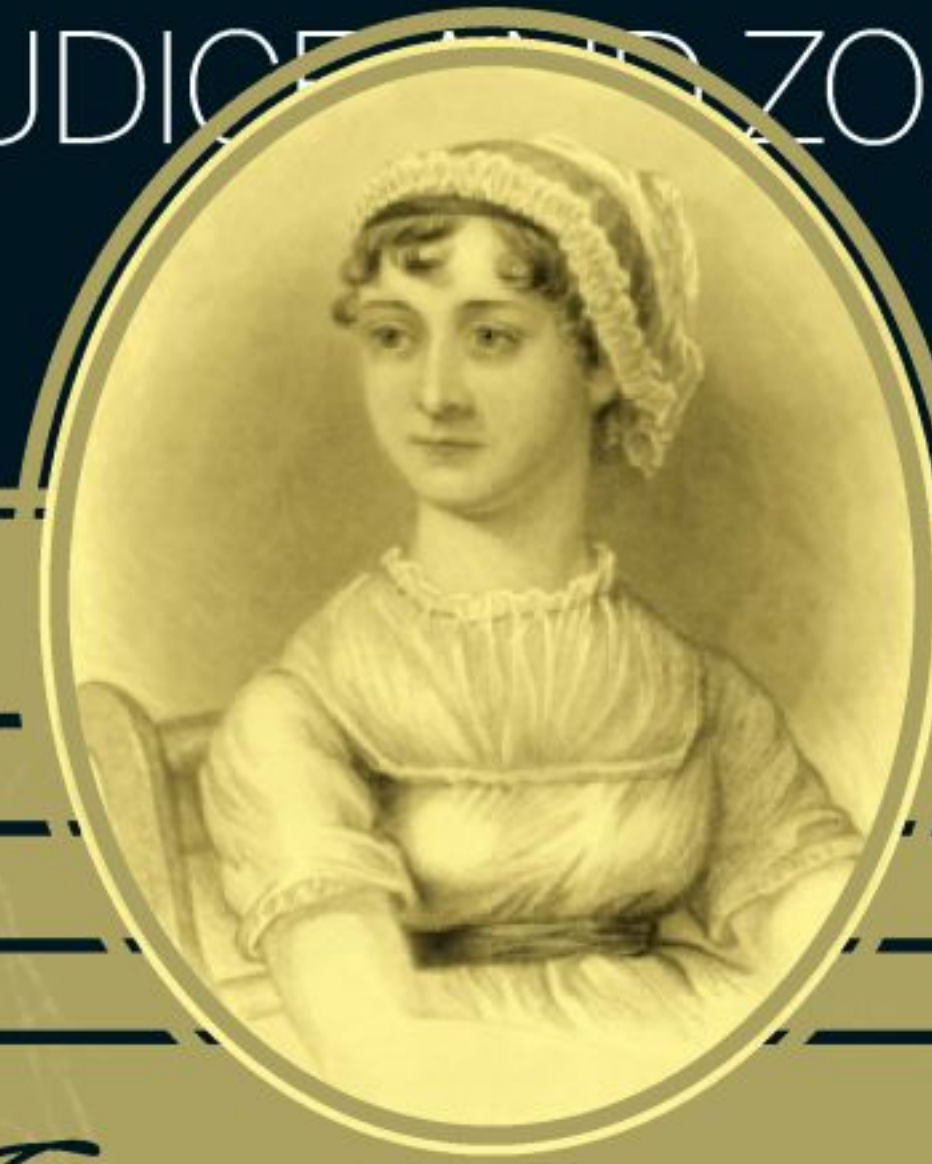


Sam Riley's Mr Darcy and Lily James's Lizzie Bennet, pre-bloodshed.



# PRIDE AND PREJUDICE AND ZOMBIES

Iron Maidens



## A lady's guide to proper etiquette

Your monthly guide to navigating the tricky waters of high society in regency England, with Jane Austen.  
This month: zombie slaying

**Hello, dear readers,** and welcome. It's been, well, it's been decades now since the zombie hordes rose from the dead to try to stop our way of life and eat our brains, and many of you have quite reasonably been asking when I was going to write about how to survive, not just as a lady in these difficult times, but how to *literally* survive.

So, without further ado, here is how the practical girl should approach the undead.

### *Always carry a weapon*

It may seem rather uncouth, not to mention uncomfortable, to bring a selection of small throwing knives to an evening of drinks, dinner and dancing, but the simple fact is that the undead can strike at any time. One of the benefits of elaborate formal wear is that there are plenty of places where one can stash a deadly weapon, and we'd all rather be deadly than dead, hmmm?

### *Know the warning signs*

Too many ladies and gentlemen have learned a valuable lesson the hard way. I'm talking, of course, about the fact that these zombies know how to blend in, how to hide amongst us. To avoid being caught unawares, keep an eye out for telltale signs. A bad smell is normally a good early warning, while the unwarranted wearing of gloves or masks could

mean there's a bite, and a biter, in your midst.

### *Know where your sisters are*

I'm sure I don't need to tell you that the best zombie killers work in teams. We can all learn from the example set by the wonderful Bennet sisters, who formed a deadly and dashing Pentagon formation just the other night. For this to work, however, it's crucial to be aware of where the other members of your team may be at any time. Watch their back, and they will watch yours.

### *Be modest, but not too modest*

We can assume that everyone has a few weapons up their sleeve at any one time, but I've never been a fan of flaunting. Whether it's the society girl with her katana or the rakish gentleman with a musket, there's an element of showing off that I just think is rather inelegant. That being said, when it's time to throw down, or if you're challenged, don't be afraid to demonstrate how deadly you are.

### *Try not to get blood everywhere*

Sometimes this is impossible, but please, for the sake of your host, do your best. Blood can be awfully tricky to get out of the carpet.



England is reeling from the zombie plague.



Matt Smith stars as the ineffectual Mr Collins.



something, and you get these people wandering onto the set and saying 'What is it you're shooting?' and you say 'Pride And Prejudice!' and you'd mumble the 'And Zombies...' Just amazing, amazing estates and it was really stunning, and having someone who knew how to shoot them in [cinematographer and veteran of Cate Blanchett's *Elizabeth* films] Remi Adefarasin and had shot in them before."

The superb cast includes *Cinderella*'s Lily James as Lizzie Bennet, Sam Riley as Darcy, as well as Matt Smith as Mr Collins, Lena Headey as Lady Catherine De Bourg, Bella Heathcote as Elizabeth's older sister, Jane, and Charles Dance as Mr Bennet, who's been training his children for battle.

"It was a gas. All the actors had to approach it seriously, which is what the best comedy comes out of. You just really find people who you can have the right conversations with that are into it, that you're going to collaborate with who are going to be fun, and you're

going to get something interesting out of it. I was relying on the fact that they would know what seems legitimate, to make it as authentic as possible. Charles Dance, I can't give him direction on what would work! 'This is the situation, this is what we're doing, what can you do?' He could read the phone book and make it interesting."

If you're at all concerned that you're not an Austen expert, or you've never even seen Colin Firth emerging from a lake in a wet shirt, don't worry. Steers tells us that *P&P&Z* will be fun even if you didn't study the Bennets for GCSE. "When they were polling our demographic of American teens, only ten per cent of them had ever heard of *Pride And Prejudice* and Jane Austen," he tells us. "They wouldn't get the inherent humour of having Liz Bennet fighting zombies." Speaking for ourselves, we just want to see Elizabeth Bennet mess some zombies up. 🐼

*Pride And Prejudice And Zombies* will be released on 5 February.



# DRESSED TO KILL 2016

How to be practical and  
stylish when you're  
severing heads

AUTUMN/WINTER



**Alice (Resident Evil)**  
Red queen

Alice has more practical looks, but if you're wanting to make a statement in your series opener, wearing a red dress, big black boots and a massive gun will certainly do the trick.



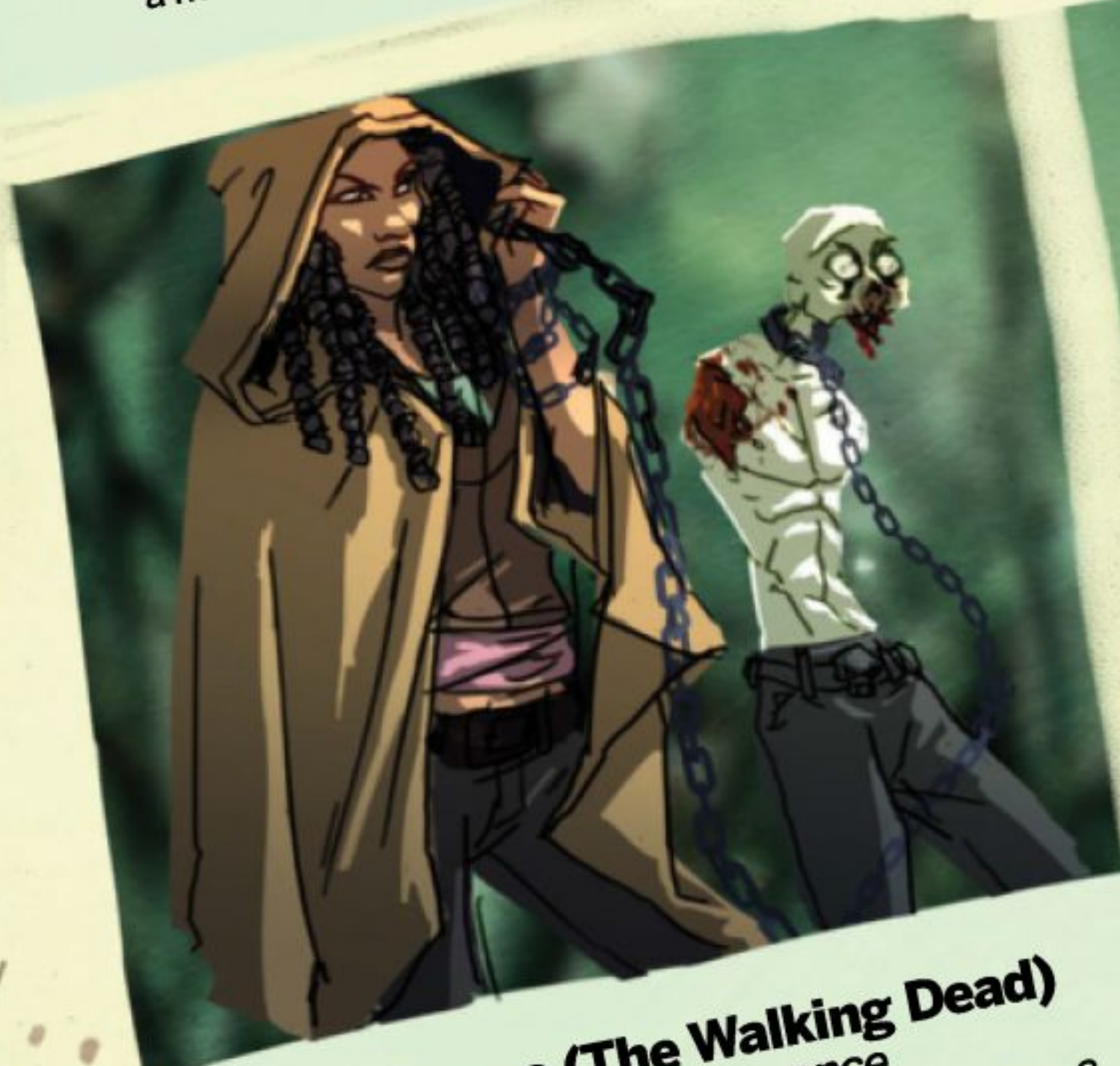
**Ash (Evil Dead)**  
Lumber-jacked

You're on a weekend away, and you're sensibly dressed for some outdoorsy practical activities. Guess what: you're also ready to get covered in blood and strap a chainsaw to your arm stump.



**Daryl Dixon (The Walking Dead)**  
Nonchalant poncho

Having been established as a fan favourite, want something a little bolder? Stand out with a poncho for crossbow adventures.



**Michonne (The Walking Dead)**  
Hooded vengeance

Honestly, could she look any more badass? She's got the hood of mystery, she's got the armless zombies acting as a distraction, and have you seen the katana?



**Peter (Dawn Of The Dead)**  
SWAT or you're not

Sometimes, even in a zombie apocalypse, you've got to call the cops. Peter's looking sharp and badass in his SWAT gear, and he's hit the mall for a sharp overcoat. All business.



**Shaun (Shaun Of The Dead)**  
Straight from work

You may hate what you have to wear to your day job, but guess what? That white shirt, red tie and red name tag is one blood splat/red ink spill away from being iconic.



**Francesco Dellamorte (Dellamorte Dellamore)**  
Can you (grave) dig it?

Burying the dead is no excuse for not dressing sharp. With a simple black suit and white shirt, Francesco shows that just because you're dead, it doesn't mean you can't be delicious.



**Lizzie Bennet (Pride And Prejudice And Zombies)**  
Soirées and steel

Elizabeth looks absolutely stunning whether she's giving you a steely glance from across the room or sliding cold steel across a zombie's throat. She's armed to the teeth and dressed to kill.



**Mr Darcy (Pride And Prejudice And Zombies)**  
Dead dapper

A long leather coat looks damn good, conceals your weapons and won't get stained by blood.



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# SciFiNow Reviews

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**AWARD EXPLAINED** THE 'MUST SEE NOW' AWARD GOES TO REVIEWS THAT SCORE EIGHT OR MORE...

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Must  
see now!

# 64 STAR WARS: THE FORCE AWAKENS

"STAR WARS HAS RETURNED, AND  
STRONG IN THE FORCE IT IS"

**TRIVIA** THE CHARACTER OF POE DAMERON WAS NAMED AFTER JJ ABRAMS' FORMER PERSONAL ASSISTANT, MORGAN DAMERON.

WorldMags.net

SciFiNow | 063



## FILM INFO

### Released

Out now

### Certificate

12A

### Director

JJ Abrams

### Screenwriters

Lawrence Kasdan, JJ Abrams, Michael Arndt

### Cast

Daisy Ridley, John Boyega, Adam Driver, Harrison Ford, Carrie Fisher, Oscar Isaac, Domhnall Gleeson, Gwendoline Christie, Lupita Nyong'o, Andy Serkis

### Distributor

Disney

### Running Time

135 mins



# STAR WARS: THE FORCE AWAKENS

Hot off the press

## FAMILIAR, THESE FACES ARE

4 actors who make unexpected cameos

### Thomas Brodie-Sangster

A genre stalwart, having starred in *Game Of Thrones*, *Phineas And Ferb*, *Thunderbirds Are Go!*, *The Maze Runner* and more. Blink and you'll miss his brief but sweet cameo as a First Order officer.

### Ken Leung

Having played corpse-whisperer Miles Straume in *Lost* and popped up in *X-Men: The Last Stand*, Leung plays a Resistance officer towards the end.

### Greg Grunberg

Currently reprising his role as Matt Parkman in *Heroes Reborn*, Grunberg is also on the good side as a Resistance fighter pilot alongside Oscar Isaac's Poe Dameron.

### Christina Chong

Having first popped up in episodes of *Doctor Who* and *Black Mirror*, Chong later picked up recurring roles in *Dominion* and *Halo: Nightfall* before making her *Star Wars* debut.

**It's safe to** say that over the last three years, *Star Wars: The Force Awakens* has redefined the meaning of the word 'fanfare'. No film has garnered this much attention, inspired this much zeitgeist-baiting hyperbole or been under this much pressure to not just succeed, but to actually be good since *The Phantom Menace*. And we know how that turned out.

Pivotal, so did JJ Abrams, Lawrence Kasdan, Kathleen Kennedy et al. Right from the *Saving Private Ryan*-in-space opening, which expands on the Stormtrooper landing sequence seen in the very first teaser, the stall is set out to be nothing at all like the prequel trilogy. Gone are the CGI omnishambles, mundane side-plots and wooden acting (well, mostly); in its place is something infinitely more simple, and most vitally, far more *Star Wars*.

As if to hammer this home, the core plot is so much like *A New Hope* that it seems as

**If you don't whoop when the Falcon first takes flight then something's clearly up.**



though Abrams hasn't so much set out his stall as he has plonked it on the front lawn of Skywalker Ranch. All the familiar character traits are there, only in a different order: scavenger Rey (Daisy Ridley) combines the curious restlessness of *A New Hope*-era Luke with the take-no-shit ballsiness of Leia, and dashing pilot Poe Dameron (Oscar Isaac) is part Han Solo, part Obi-Wan Kenobi in his whip-smart, WWI fighter pilot derring-do.

Amid all this, however, there are wild cards like Finn (John Boyega). By turns bemused/horrified onlooker and have-a-go hero, he is possibly the first character in *Star Wars* history to truly capture the wide-eyed awe and wonder that we as viewers feel. He is also the best thing about the film, his note-perfect comic timing and steadfast relatability impressing in an entirely different way from his scenery-skewing Moses in *Attack The Block*. Near enough every scene of his is a highlight – which is high praise indeed, considering that many of them are shared with Harrison Ford.

Ah, Han Solo. Out of all the old timers, he and Chewbacca easily get the most screen time, and it's as if they've never been away. Han and Leia were the romantic coupling, but he and Chewie were the original married couple – they

bicker together, fight together, and look out for each other. There was never any danger of there being any shortage of heart in *The Force Awakens*, but after all this time, the two are still the saga's warm, beating centre, with even Chewbacca revealing all-new layers to his personality.

From there, all the familiar story beats are present: hero on a mission, a crucial droid, a surprise saviour, destruction on a huge scale, a mysterious villain, and a convergence of all of the above that ends up having galaxy-spanning ramifications. This is clearly a deliberate attempt to avoid the factors that have been deemed in the past to have adversely impacted on the saga, and as it turns out, this devotion to *Star Wars'* best moments is both a strength and a weakness.

Without spoiling things, there is a lot that is recognisable about *The Force Awakens* – almost too recognisable, as it sometimes turns out. Basing large parts of a story's framework on a classic piece of cinema isn't a bad idea, but to a degree a lot of tension is lost as a result. Even when the stakes are raised and the danger is made as evident as possible, the ending is never really in any doubt. What's here is still as purely entertaining as anything we've seen in 2015, but at times it seems like things are being played a bit too safe. Once you've





New faces Rey (Daisy Ridley), BB-8 and Poe Dameron (Oscar Isaac) are all instant favourites.



It's nice to see Leia (Carrie Fisher) and Han Solo (Harrison Ford) return.



Kylo Ren (Adam Driver) is like no *Star Wars* villain we've seen before.

dialled it up to 11, it's difficult to see where things can go after that.

For all the structural similarities, however, this is recognisably an Abrams film. His wide-eyed capering and wry yet sincere scripting proves to be a good fit for *Star Wars*, homaging its more wide-eyed elements without taking the piss outright. Han and Chewie are a particularly good fit for this style, their disdain and amusement at the antics of those around them proving to be yet another highlight.

Yet, as *Star Trek* fans discovered, Abrams isn't afraid to rock the fanboy boat, and some *Star Wars* fans will undoubtedly be left feeling the same as their Starfleet counterparts did. Let's just say the status quo has been altered, and not everybody will like the changes.

Another thing that will likely prove divisive is Daisy Ridley's performance as Rey. With few credits to her name, leading what will likely become the highest grossing film of all time is a massive ask, but she pulls it off. After an awkward start and some stumbling line delivery, she comes into her own, thankfully leaving Hayden Christensen territory far behind. She's not note-perfect by any means, but there's definitely something about her that allows her casting to make sense.

Also likely to provoke debate is Adam Driver's Kylo Ren. Although there's nothing wrong with Driver's performance, which combines the softly spoken mannerisms and

drop-of-a-hat mania of his *Girls* persona to great effect, his back story isn't given enough attention to warrant the kind of investment his character requires. This extends to the rest of the film – much is left vague and unexplained, to be disclosed at a future point. He's definitely a unique *Star Wars* villain, but it remains to be seen whether he becomes a classic one.

Elsewhere, mixed fortunes are enjoyed. After an explosive introduction, Oscar Isaac goes missing for large interludes – which is a shame, because whenever he does appear he's brilliant. Lupita Nyong'o is similarly evasive, showing up for an extended cameo before being forgotten about entirely, although fellow CGI creation Supreme Leader Snoke (Andy Serkis) is memorably chilling.

Conversely, anyone hoping that Gwendoline Christie's Captain Phasma would be the saga's first truly formidable female villain will be sorely disappointed (she's barely in it), and Domhnall Gleeson's General Hux feels misjudged somehow, aiming for Peter Cushing's Grand Moff Tarkin but somehow landing on spitty shouty-ness along the way.

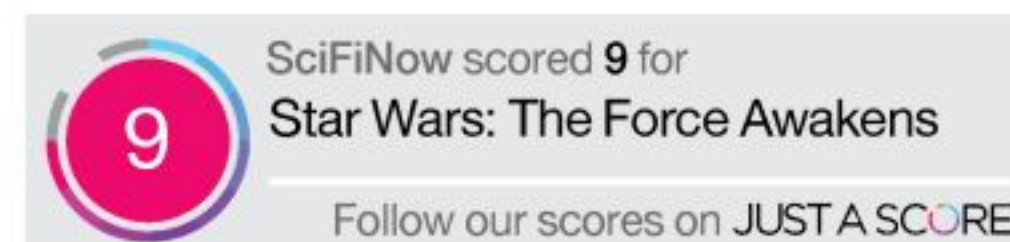
The robotic characters are similarly divided in their impact on the film. For all the cooing he inspired in the lead-up, beach-ball droid BB-8 is essentially a

macguffin – albeit an unbearably lovable one. Meanwhile, old mechs C-3PO and R2-D2 are disarmingly welcome when they show up – even if the latter's contribution is all-too brief (although vital as always).

All the elements exist for a truly great *Star Wars* film. The closest touchstone we can recall for *The Force Awakens* is *Jurassic World*: it's so recognisably of its universe that even if you don't agree with the choices that have been made, you will note that not only has it been put together by someone with the saga's interests clearly at heart, but you will feel something.

Even if it isn't the greatest *Star Wars* film ever, it's almost certainly the most affecting of them all. It knows what its audience wants, and delivers in spades, emphatically bringing the sense of wonder back to the saga. In short, *Star Wars* has returned, and strong in the Force it is.

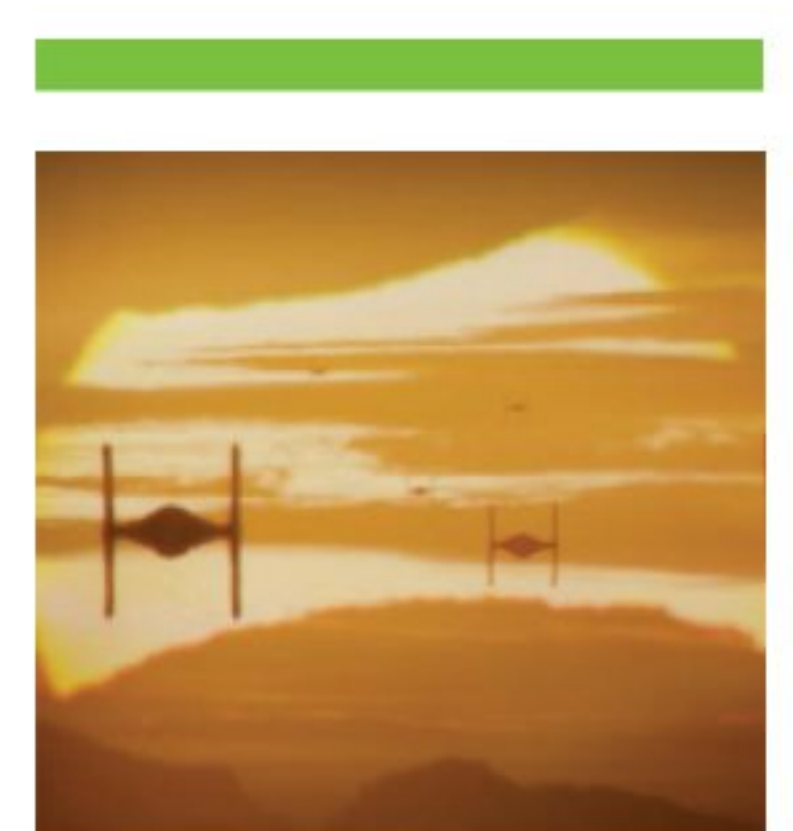
**Steve Wright**



**OR STAY IN AND WATCH...**



**Star Trek**  
Abrams' take on Gene Roddenberry's world was just as game-changing and, most importantly, just as fun.



## MORE TO SAY, WE HAVE

**Why *The Force Awakens* is only the beginning**

Intriguingly, as you will have no doubt discovered by now (if you haven't watched it yet, then why the hell not? Rectify this immediately), a lot of things are left unexplained in *The Force Awakens* with regards plot and scene-setting – like exactly how the First Order came about, for example. Expect this to potentially be explored in one of the spin-off films (we wouldn't be surprised if the one formerly helmed by Josh Trank is intended for this purpose), as well as Chuck Wendig's two upcoming *Aftermath* novels, both due to be released later in 2016.





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# BONE TOMAHAWK

Blood on the sand

**Details** 18 // 132 mins // 19 February **Director** S Craig Zahler **Screenwriter** S Craig Zahler  
**Cast** Kurt Russell, Richard Jenkins, Patrick Wilson, Matthew Fox, Lili Simmons **Distributor** The Works



**The 'horror Western'** subgenre is a small one, so any new additions are more than welcome. While *Bone Tomahawk* is much more

a Western than it is a horror, fans of both genres should find much to enjoy in S Craig Zahler's brutal slow-burner.

When Sheriff Franklin Hunt (Kurt Russell) puts a bullet in a drifter's leg, Arthur O'Dwyer (Patrick Wilson)'s wife Samantha (Lili Simmons) is on call to give him medical treatment. Come dawn, they are all missing, abducted by a savage tribe of Native Americans – a band of troglodytic cannibals.

Hunt, O'Dwyer, gunslinger John Brooder (Matthew Fox) and back-up deputy Chicory (Richard Jenkins) set out in pursuit, but with O'Dwyer's broken leg and the simple fact of four men against the wilderness, do they have any hope of getting back alive?

Zahler's Old West as a dangerous, unwelcoming place where horrors

are waiting just outside the doors of the little outpost of 'civilisation'. It's a world that these men don't understand, despite their best efforts, riding into the desert with no time to prepare and no real notion of what they're going to do when they catch up with their quarry. The quietly trigger-happy Brooder is arguably the best equipped, but he's so tainted by his hatred of the natives that his only relationship is with his horse.

There's punishment waiting for these men. When the horror arrives it is brutal, with one sequence sure to turn stomachs and send your hands flying to cover your eyes. It's the Jack Ketchum-esque final act that brings the leisurely paced film to a punishing end.

There are some problems, mostly with the pacing. It's overlong at 132 minutes, and the characterisation seems to have been spent primarily on Chicory. However, Jenkins is sublime, and his scenes with Russell are a joy.

Requiring both patience and a cast-iron stomach, *Bone Tomahawk* is an acquired taste, but it stays with you long after it's over.

**Jonathan Hatfull**

SciFiNow scored **8** for Bone Tomahawk  
Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE

## OR STAY IN AND WATCH...



**Ravenous**  
Antonia Bird's horror Western has Guy Pearce trying to avoid being eaten by Robert Carlyle



SciFiNow  
Must  
see now!

# GOOSEBUMPS

Monster mash

**Details** PG // 103 mins // 5 February **Director** Rob Letterman **Screenwriter** Darren Lemke **Cast** Jack Black, Dylan Minnette, Odeya Rush, Amy Ryan, Ryan Lee, Jillian Bell  
**Distributor** Columbia Pictures



**Is third time the charm?** It looks so, as previous collaborations between director Rob Letterman and actor Jack Black,

although financially successful, fall firmly into the 'meh' category. With *Goosebumps*, however, they have finally delivered a high-octane thrill ride through the charmingly wicked imagination of RL Stine, the man responsible for childhood nightmares of the Nineties-born generation.

Following a well-worn template – boy Zach (Dylan Minnette) moves to a small provincial town, where he meets neighbour Hannah (Odeya Rush), who is keeping a secret from him – the film has a familiar flavour, but ultimately this works in its favour, as later on the structure is broken and all literary hell breaks loose.

*Goosebumps* speeds up helter-skelter in the second act and never loses its momentum, providing an eye-popping feast. Cool visuals aside, it's also full of intertextual

content. Obviously enough, the film incorporates plot elements and characters from Stine's prose, but with the rare purpose of building them up into a complex braid of creatively used cinematic references, ranging from Fifties monster movies to the likes of *Night Of The Living Dead*. So while kids will be alternately laughing their heads off and fearfully covering their eyes, accompanying adults will have their share of fun.

*Goosebumps* is wisely and widely auto-thematic while self-referential on many different layers, Jack Black's performance as the fictionalised version of Stine himself being the most obvious (it even says a lot about the merciless – but nevertheless entertaining and rewarding – process of creation), so you'd better be ready to scrape those layers off.

Sony is striking while the iron is hot and already looking for someone to write a sequel, which is fine, as there is more than enough material to make a long-running franchise here.

**Bartosz Czaratoryski**

SciFiNow scored **8** for Goosebumps  
Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE

## OR STAY IN AND WATCH...



**The Monster Squad**  
A group of kids take on the Universal Monsters. Penned by Shane Black, it is an underrated classic.



## FILM INFO

**Released**

Out now

**Certificate**

15

**Director**

Michael Dougherty

**Screenwriters**

Todd Casey, Michael Dougherty, Zach Shields

**Cast**

Adam Scott, Toni Collette, David Koechner, Allison Tolman, Emjay Anthony

**Distributor**

Universal Pictures

**Running Time**

98 mins



## CHRISTMAS EVIL...

4 characters you wouldn't want down your chimney

### Jack Frost

Not the Michael Keaton movie; this 1997 schlocker had a serial killer resurrected in the form of a snowman before embarking on a murderous rampage.

### La Femme (Inside)

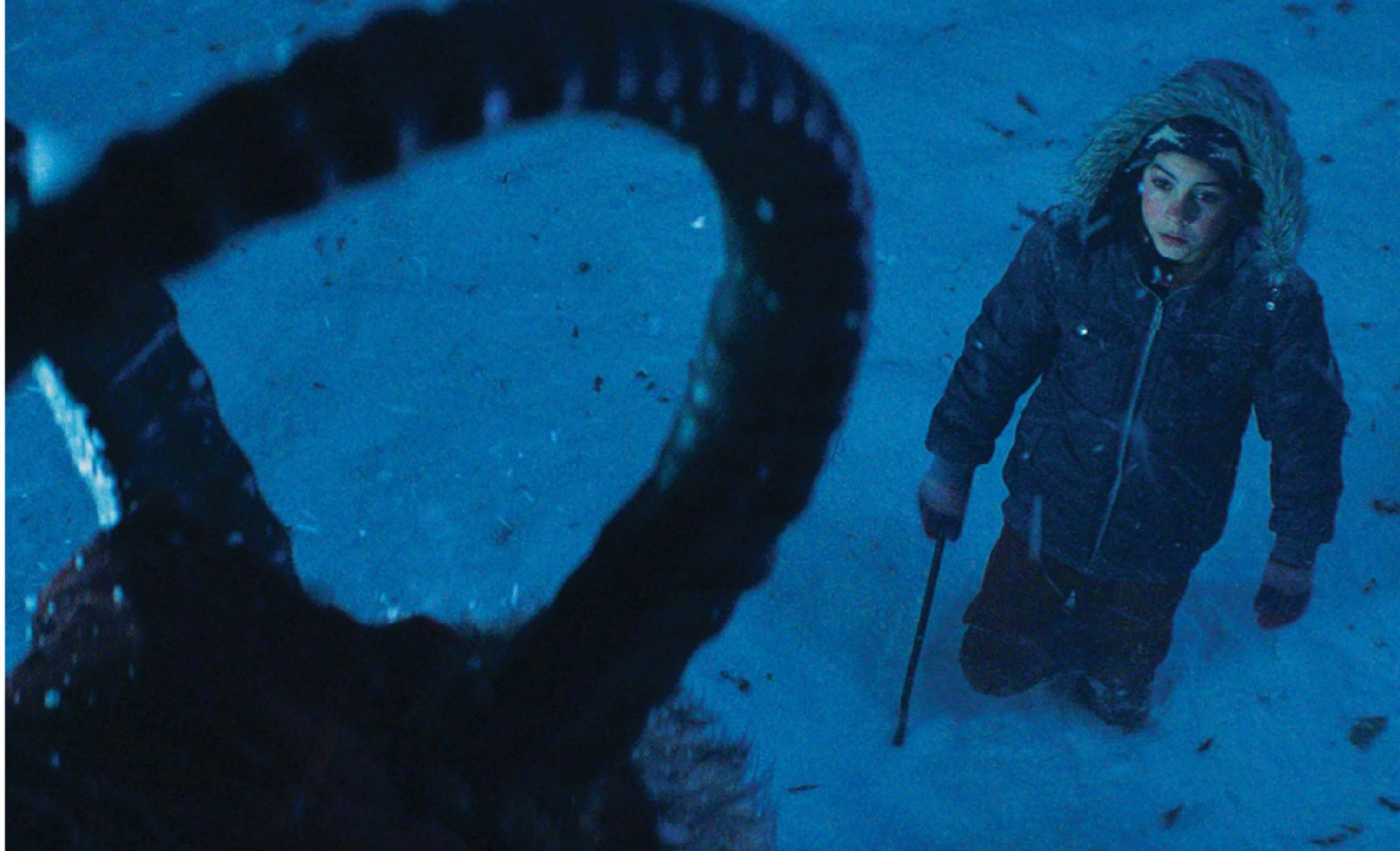
Beatrice Dalle's vicious unnamed woman invades the home of grieving, heavily pregnant Alysson Paradis on Christmas Eve to get her baby by any means necessary.

### Billy Chapman (Silent Night, Deadly Night)

Billy is just trying to get his life together after he saw his mother murdered by a guy dressed as Santa as a kid, but this time of year is hard...

### Stripe (Gremlins)

Sure, Gizmo's adorable and cuddly. However, this little bastard is anything but. He'll create legions of himself, take over the town and try to kill you.



# KRAMPUS

## He knows if you've been bad or good

If anyone's qualified to turn Christmas into a terrifying cautionary tale, it's *Trick R Treat*'s Michael Dougherty, which is why our expectations for *Krampus* were very high. Having seen it, we're confident that while it may not be for everyone, this could be a new addition to your annual seasonal viewing.

It's 23 December, and young Max (Emjay Anthony) is struggling to hold on to his Christmas cheer. When his cousins steal his letter to Santa, which details how he wishes his family could come together, he throws it away, at which point the power goes out and a blizzard begins. There's no signal, no heat, and no one to help when an ancient evil descends on their home. Can they keep the fire hot and each other safe, or will they pay the price for forgetting the true meaning of Christmas?

Much as *Trick R Treat* focused on the importance of following the rules of Halloween, *Krampus* is all about paying Christmas the proper respect. Dougherty opens his movie with a slow-motion sequence of superstore carnage, with adults fighting over toys and children crying on Santa's lap. Store-

bought cookies, families fighting, working during the holidays – there's a reason why Max's Austrian grandma Omi (Krista Stadler) looks so worried: every ancient rule has been broken.

The film is at its wobbliest during this *Home Alone*-esque setup, and although the excellent cast sell the Christmas cookie-cutter characterisation (Toni Collette's Sarah seems a little too firmly set on 'brittle control freak'), it feels like we're on very familiar ground. However, when the dark and snow descend, the film quickly hits its stride. An early encounter with Krampus makes it very clear that the threat is real, and despite some pacing issues, the tension doesn't really let up.

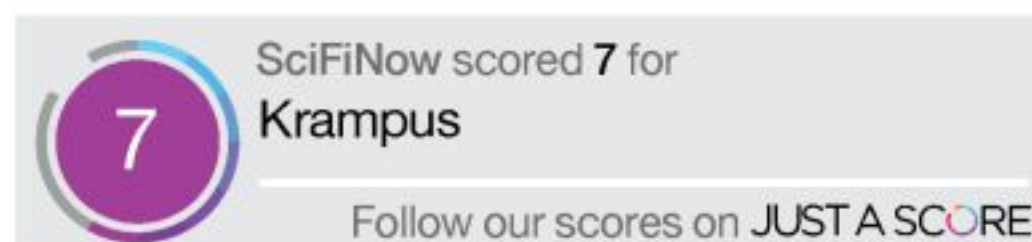
The question of the film's audience will obviously be raised, with a PG-13 rating but some really quite intense scares. The giddy monster horror of *Gremlins* seems to have been used as a template, with nightmarish (and beautifully designed) creatures and a body count. There are wackier elements, like the evil gingerbread men, but for the

most part it takes its mission to scare its younger viewers very seriously.

The four leads are perfectly chosen, finding the humour but taking the material totally seriously. Collette and Adam Scott make for strong emotional anchors, David Koechner is excellent, and *Fargo*'s Allison Tolman is on great form. The film's respect for Christmas tradition is mirrored in the seriousness with which it approaches the family drama. For every terrifying face-off with one of Krampus' minions, we have a scene in which this dysfunctional family begins to repair its bonds, which in turn makes their failure to keep each other safe all the more distressing.

The film's shifting focus begs the question of who the film's really for, but the answer is simple. Kids looking for a scary movie will be terrified, and big kids who still love *Gremlins* will have a great time. Watching Collette, Tolman and Scott tangle with bizarre monstrosities based on Christmas toys in a poorly lit attic while Koechner face off with gingerbread men armed with a nail gun in the kitchen, we give thanks that such a dark, weird and hugely entertaining movie exists. It's a bit rickety, but if you're looking for something to offset the treacle then we highly recommend this wickedly fun gift.

Jonathan Hatfull



## OR STAY IN AND WATCH...





# ALIEN EXTINCTION

Better than Sharknado

**Details** 15 // 86 mins // 2015 // **DVD** // **Released** Out now **Director** James Kondelik  
**Cast** Kelly Hu, Anthony Marks, Robert Picardo **Distributor** 20th Century Fox Home Entertainment



When hostile UFOs pick Earth as its next victim, the human race is forced to fight to survive while a team of brave volunteers sneak aboard the mothership in an attempt to stop the attack before it goes too far.

*Alien Extinction* is pretty terrible. Nothing about it is higher than below par, from the acting and the effects to the storyline. The script is terribly cheesy, and delivered in such a way that makes it seem it even more so. The aliens'



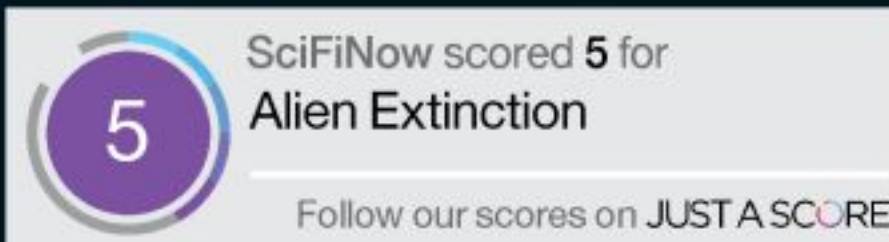
aesthetics are just a step above classic *Doctor Who*-level. Plus, the characters are over the top and completely unlikable.

However, all the awfulness comes together beautifully to make something that's hilarious and endlessly entertaining. This is a rare film that wins in its failures.

If you were one of the many people who were actually excited for *Sharknado* but found it boring and bitterly disappointing, you're going to be surprised by *Alien Extinction*.

The phrase 'so bad that it's good' actually applies in this case. People get abducted, heads get blown up, and it's all non-stop delicious fun.

Poppy-Jay Palmer



# THE VISIT

Bad grandpa

**Details** 15 // 94 mins // 2015 // **DVD** // **Released** 18 January **Director** M Night Shyamalan **Cast** Olivia DeJonge, Ed Oxenbould, Kathryn Hahn, Deanna Dunagan, Peter McRobbie **Distributor** Universal



M Night Shyamalan's moderately touted return to horror was a massive financial success for Blumhouse,

and it did seem to win over a lot of audiences. That being said, we were not among those audiences.

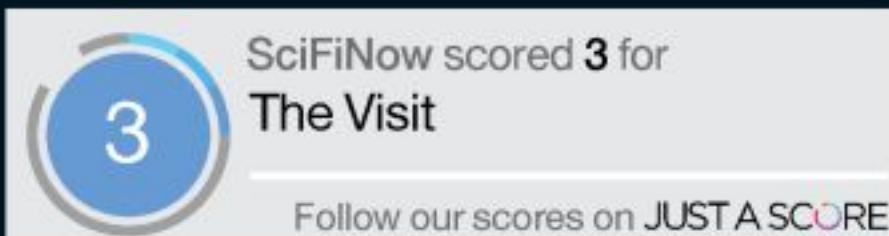
Becca (Olivia DeJonge) and Tyler (Ed Oxenbould) go to visit their grandparents, who their mother (Kathryn Hahn) had cut off contact with shortly before they were born. Becca's filming the whole thing



for a documentary, but when she captures some weird high-time activity, they have to ask if this is just odd old people behaviour or something more sinister.

After a promising start, *The Visit* quickly starts to drag. It's lacking in atmosphere, it's not scary, and it can't seem to settle on the question of how it wants to treat its elderly characters. There are the seeds of a good horror here, there are one or two good chills, and the two grandparents are excellent (Deanna Dunagan is particularly good as Nana), but any promise is squandered and the finale feels crass and unpleasant. Still, at least Kathryn Hahn's in it.

Jonathan Hatfull



# ZOMBIE FLESH EATERS 2

Dead rising

**Details** 18 // 84 mins // 1988 // **DVD** // **Released** Out now **Director** Lucio Fulci  
**Cast** Deran Sarafian, Beatrice Ring, Ottaviano Dell'Acqua **Distributor** 88 Films



Although ostensibly

a Lucio Fulci film, in reality there aren't a lot of similarities with its predecessor – aside from the presence of the undead, of course. There's a new cast of characters, and the tone seems more inspired by *Return Of The Living Dead* rather than *Dawn Of The Dead*. Indeed, Fulci dropped out some way into filming, with large segments instead being helmed by his contemporary, Bruno Mattei.

The result is at times fairly by-the-numbers, but otherwise *Zombie Flesh Eaters 2* (confusingly referred to as *Zombi 3* on the cover sleeve) is entertaining enough. When a security lapse causes a zombie-inducing virus to be unleashed on a local resort, the military works to contain it. Things get complicated when a group of holidaying GIs stumble upon the outbreak, leading to a game of cat-and-mouse as they try to escape.

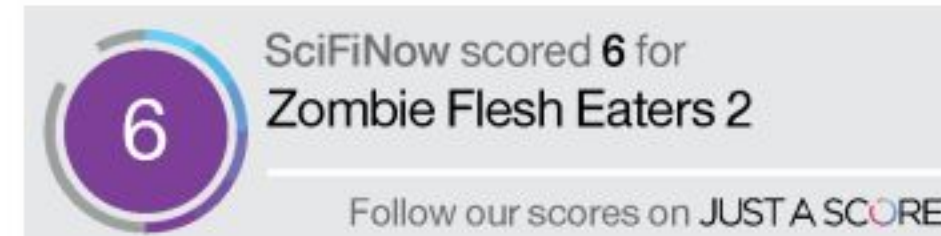
In truth, however, the thinly sketched plot simply serves as a skeleton framework for all the undead antics that ensue. Most memorable of which

are the death scenes, most notably a horribly drawn-out eye-gouging scene, as well as an airborne avian assault that recalls Alfred Hitchcock's *The Birds*. Indeed, cult film references seem to be the order of the day here, with a recurring DJ soundtrack chronicling the characters' escapades that seems heavily reminiscent of *The Warriors*.

Homages aside, however, there's nothing here that's memorable enough to allow this to stand out in the zombie movie pantheon. While the first *Zombie Flesh Eaters* had zombie vs shark, the closest this has is one of the hapless survivors being gunned down by the army – which itself is a homage to *Night Of The Living Dead* – and a surprise zombie-wielding-a-machete scene that sees the film rewrite its own rules on what the undead can do entirely.

Zombie movie aficionados will find a lot to enjoy here – although equally it will come across as something for a letdown for those drawn in by the video-nasty allure of its predecessor. It's full of gore and grime, but surprisingly low on shock value, all things considered.

Steve Wright



IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...



**Day Of The Dead**  
 The closest thing this has to a counterpart in its army base setting, and a must-watch for all zombie fans.





# CRIMSON PEAK Modern gothic

**Details** 15 // 119 mins // 2015 //   // **Released** 22 February  
**Director** Guillermo del Toro **Cast** Mia Wasikowska, Tom Hiddleston, Jessica Chastain  
**Distributor** Universal Pictures UK



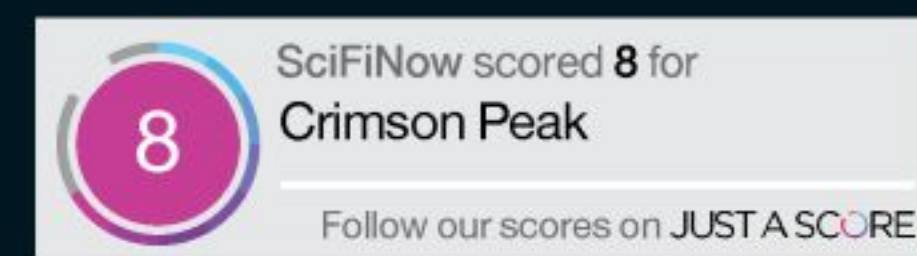
**It's always rewarding** to see what is clearly a director's passion project come to fruition, and there's a lot to love about Guillermo del Toro's *Crimson Peak*, a film that wears its literary and cinematic inspiration proudly on its blood-soaked sleeve.

Seeing young writer Edith (Mia Wasikowska) abscond to England with the dashing but mysterious Thomas (Tom Hiddleston) and his sister Lucille (Jessica Chastain), there are callbacks aplenty to tonally gothic literary touchstones like *Wuthering Heights* and *Jane Eyre*, all the while del Toro infuses the story with varying shades of Lovecraft. If his *Mountains Of Madness* movie never gets made then this is the next best thing.

Every performance is on point – especially Chastain, who

channels Bertha Mason and Cersei Lannister as Lucille – and perfectly at home in this dark, bleeding world that del Toro has created. It's a haunted-house movie for a new generation, and an excellent one at that. It's filled with twists and turns galore, and the ghosts are a visual spectacle. Gothic horror doesn't get much better than this.

**Steve Wright**



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# SINISTER 2 If you're feeling...

**Details** 15 // 97 mins // 2015 //   // **Released** Out now  
**Director** Ciaran Foy **Cast** Shannyn Sossamon, James Ransone, Tate Ellington  
**Distributor** Entertainment One



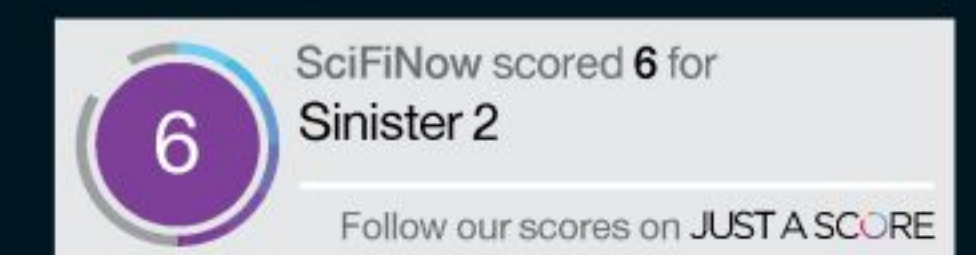
**Blumhouse productions live** and die by coming across formulas. With Scott Derrickson's *Sinister*, it looked like they had found another one via putting Ethan Hawke's patriarch through the mill after watching a series of increasingly gruelling snuff movies. Surprisingly, however, Ciaran Foy's sequel tampers with the status quo.

With the first film having revealed sinister spectre Bughuul's secrets, *Sinister 2* goes a different route,

following the returning Deputy So-And-So (James Ransone) as he attempts to halt the cycle of death, which seems to be targeted next at single mother Courtney (Shannyn Sossamon) and her two children Dylan (Robert Daniel Sloan) and Zach (the brilliantly named Dartanian Sloan). The pace is slow – too slow at times – but it's punctuated by some excellently creepy death scenes, the home-film recordings adding chilling realism.

It all gets a bit silly in the final act – especially when Bughuul appears, looking too much like a member of Slipknot to inspire any fear whatsoever – but before that is a perfectly competent horror movie.

**Steve Wright**



# ONE AND TWO I want to break free

**Details** 15 // 90 mins // 2015 //   // **Released** Out now **Director** Andrew Droz Palermo **Cast** Kiernan Shipka, Timothée Chalamet, Grant Bowler, Elizabeth Reaser  
**Distributor** Metrodome



**Andrew Droz**

**Palermo's** leisurely coming-of-age tale *One And Two* takes the puberty metaphors of superhero

mythology and locates them in an eerily still and isolated rural America.

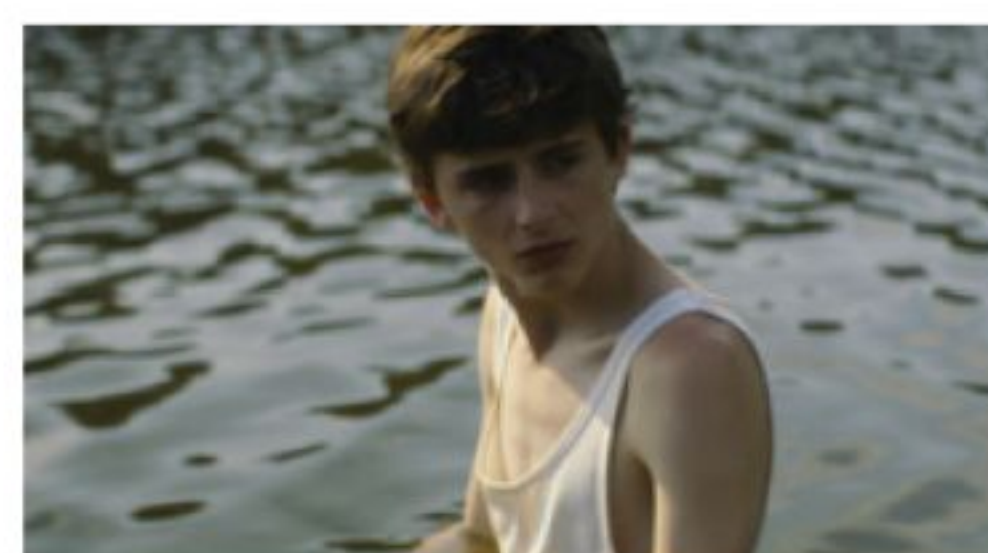
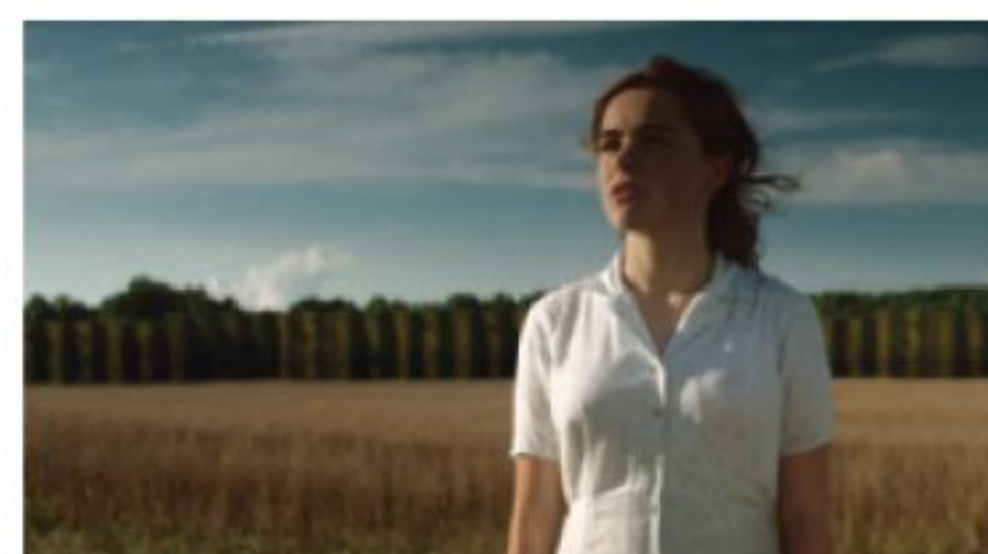
Putting characters with Nightcrawler's powers from the *X-Men* into a Terrence Malick landscape is a nice idea, even if there's not a lot of substance beyond that.

Eva (Kiernan Shipka) and Zac (Timothée Chalamet) live with their parents on a farm surrounded by a large wall. They're both hiding a powerful secret: they can teleport, which scares the life out of their short-tempered father Daniel (Grant Bowler). Every time they use their abilities, their kindly mother Elizabeth (Elizabeth Reaser) seems to get sicker and sicker.

Will Eva and Zac do as their father commands and put a stop to their nightly jumps out of the house, or will they finally break free from him?

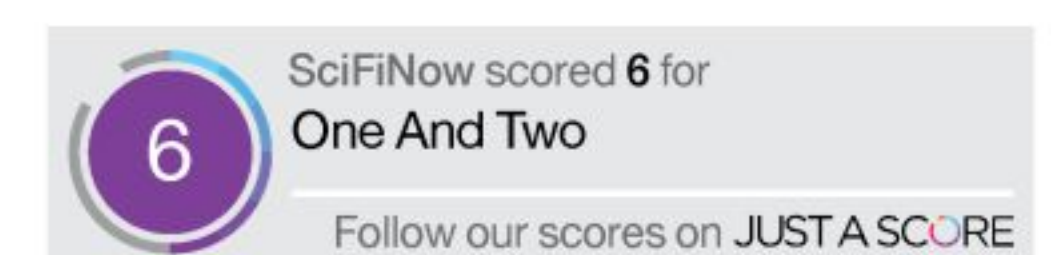
The script from Palermo and Neima Shahdadi offers a beguiling setup, as the idyllic world that this family has created for themselves starts to reveal itself as something more sinister. It quickly becomes apparent that the wall has been constructed to keep the children in rather than anything out, and Bowler's tightly wound performance is a welcome threat in a film with so little forward momentum.

This might sound unkind, but it's accurate, as *One And Two* is simply the story of its two teens trying to break out from their oppressive home life, and the second half seems to be spinning its wheels a bit. The pressure cooker of Zac and Eva's home is nicely contrasted with the understated magic of their abilities, and Chalamet and especially Shipka (*Mad Men's* Sally Draper) are excellent as the two teenagers faced with the question of whether or not to embrace their potential or live according to their home's oppressive rules.



It's a very handsomely made film, the performances are very good, and Palermo's understated vision is definitely intriguing. We just can't help wishing that there was a bit more to it.

**Jonathan Hatfull**



## IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...



**The Falling**  
Maisie Williams suffers from fainting fits in Carol Morley's superb slice of dreamy magical realism.





# CHILDREN OF THE CORN

And a child shall lead them

**Details** 18 // 92 mins // 1984 // **Released** 8 February **Director** Fritz Kiersch  
**Cast** Peter Horton, Linda Hamilton, RG Armstrong, John Franklin **Distributor** 88 Films



## As horror franchises

go, the *Children Of The Corn* movies were never in the upper echelon. In fact, it's easy to forget that

the franchise was somehow spun out into eight films (the first three will be available as a box-set at the same time as this). Going back to the original, however, you can see the seeds (sorry) of an interesting idea. *Children Of The Corn* plays on a couple of distinct classic horror phobias: of children and of the rural American south.

Based on the Stephen King short story, it finds Burt (Peter Horton) and Vicky (Linda Hamilton) travelling across the country for his new job as a doctor. Unfortunately for them, they have to pass through Gatlin, a small farming town surrounded by cornfields, where the local children decided to kill all the adults at the urging of sinister holy boy Isaac (John Franklin). Can they escape without being sacrificed to He Who Walks Behind The Rows?

There's plenty here to remind you of why this film became something of a late-night TV classic. From the opening

sequence in which the children butcher the adults enjoying their post-church meal at the diner and the surprisingly grisly rituals, to the image of whatever the hell is tunnelling through the rows of corn, it's confident and fairly confrontational. Best of all is Franklin as Isaac, whose sinister stare and chilling voice hold up much better than most of the rest of the film.

On the other hand, there's the grown-ups. There's a very good reason why the *South Park* episode that spoofed the film pointed out how clunkily their relationship is painted (he's got an incredible job opportunity, she wants commitment), and there are some weird moments of attempted comedy that remind you that you're not quite watching a classic.

As a short story adaptation, it does suffer from periods of wheel-spinning, there are some truly ropey effects towards the end of the movie, and frankly it doesn't all work, but there's enough here to show that your nostalgia for the movie with the weird kids and corn monsters isn't entirely misplaced.

**Jonathan Hatfull**

SciFiNow scored 6 for  
**Children of the Corn**  
Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE

## IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...



**Pet Semetary**  
Mary Lambert's terrifying film of one of King's nastiest tales is weirdly underrated and hasn't aged a day.

# MAZE RUNNER: THE SCORCH TRIALS

Just keep running

**Details** 12 // 131 mins // 2015 // **Released** 1 February **Director** Wes Ball  
**Cast** Dylan O'Brien, Kaya Scodelario, Thomas Brodie-Sangster, Rosa Salazar, Giancarlo Esposito **Distributor** 20th Century Fox Home Entertainment



The first thing that should be noted about *The Scorch Trials* is that it is quite different from the book, and not in a small way. The general premise is pretty far removed, and many of the details aren't the same.

Differences aside, it's a solid second effort. The bond that has been built between the lead cast members is evident to the point that you really can believe they would do anything for each other. This is never more apparent than in the

instance where they choose to let one member go for his own good.

The new cast members make it stand apart from its predecessor. Brenda (Rosa Salazar) is a strong addition, with her ballsy attitude and 'don't mess with me' aura. *Breaking Bad*'s Giancarlo Esposito and *Firefly* alum Alan Tudyk offer the best performances; Esposito's Jorge's penchant for explosives providing some of the best sequences, while Tudyk's Marcus is a comic highlight.

With the setup for the final part so different, it'll be interesting to see where they go from here.

**Jen Neal**



SciFiNow scored 7 for  
**Maze Runner: The Scorch Trials**  
Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE

# THE VATICAN TAPES

Padre Peña

**Details** 15 // 87 mins // 2015 // **Released** Out now **Director** Mark Neveldine  
**Cast** Olivia Dudley, Michael Peña, Dougray Scott, Djimon Hounsou  
**Distributor** Signature Entertainment



Crank co-creator Mark Neveldine goes his own way, but keeps some of that trademark visual flair for this exorcism

horror, which was largely ignored on release.

It's better than you might have heard, but there's not really enough here to make it stand out from the pack. Olivia Dudley (*Paranormal Activity: The Ghost Dimension*) plays Angela, a young woman who succumbs to mysterious fits before making it very clear that dark forces have taken control of her body.

The script keeps the exact nature of those dark forces and what they want a mystery for the bulk of the running time, going through the usual motions of taking Angela to hospital, a mental hospital, and finally her attic for the big show. Neveldine shoots the movie through a slightly drained, sickly yellow filter, which adds to the unease, and the cast is strong (Michael Peña as the good priest, Dougray Scott as Angela's religious dad and Djimon Hounsou in a cameo as a cardinal), but it's hard to shake the idea that we've been here before.

The ending has a bit of bite to it, though, and it packs a few jumps and chills along the way.

**Jonathan Hatfull**



SciFiNow scored 6 for  
**The Vatican Tapes**  
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# AIR Hold your breath

**Details** 12 // 95 mins // 2015 // **DVD** // **Released** 18 January **Director** Christian Cantamessa **Cast** Norman Reedus, Djimon Hounsou **Distributor** Skybound



In the near future, air is no longer breathable, and most of the population has been wiped out.

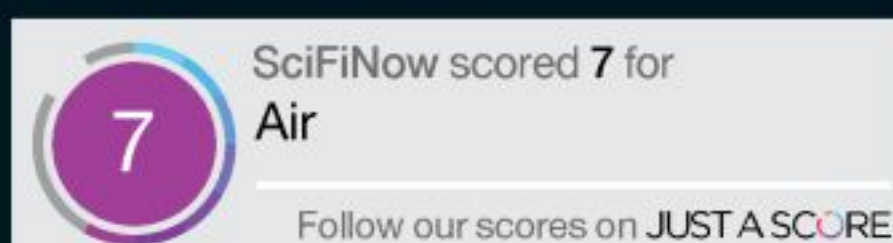
Only a handful of scientists and maintenance workers remain, cryogenically frozen until the atmosphere goes back to normal.

Meanwhile, engineers Bauer (Norman Reedus) and Cartwright (Djimon Hounsou) are woken up for two hours every six months and tasked with watching over the suspended bodies to see if anybody is going to make it to the other side. The dynamic between them starts to change, however, when Cartwright's sleep chamber is destroyed and they are forced to venture out to find a new one.

Considering the severity of *Air's* setup, it's unusually understated.

It's mostly set in a dank, dark metal container, the effect of which is both claustrophobic and intimate, but it's also refreshingly original. Strong performances from both Reedus and Hounsou and strong direction from Cantamessa make *Air* a captivating maze of tension, emotions and pure sci-fi.

**Poppy-Jay Palmer**



# PIXELS Game over

**Details** 12 // 106 mins // 2015 // **DVD** // **Released** Out now **Director** Chris Columbus **Cast** Adam Sandler, Kevin James, Josh Gad, Peter Dinklage **Distributor** Sony Pictures Home Entertainment



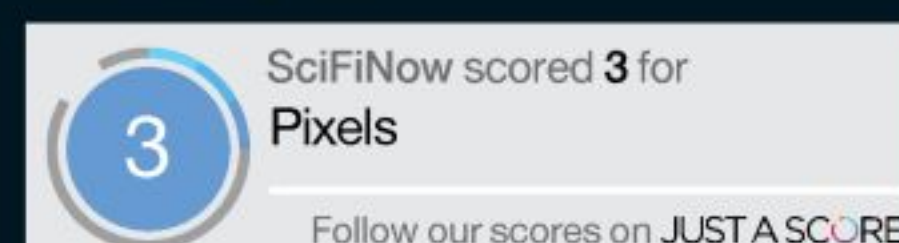
**Pixels** has an interesting premise with a lot of comic potential: classic videogame characters

coming to life and wreaking havoc on mankind. Unfortunately, it's all been put together so haphazardly that it's hard to get on board with it.

If not for the decent supporting cast that Adam Sandler surrounds himself with (Kevin James, Peter Dinklage and Josh Gad are all decent enough value) then there would be nothing at all to recommend. As it is, the action sequences are remarkably devoid of tension or comedy (save the Pac-Man battle), and there are no non-reductive female characters to speak of, with Jane Krakowski in particular being criminally wasted.

Despite having the otherwise fantastic Chris Columbus at the helm, everything about *Pixels* just ends up feeling badly misjudged. There are few genuine laughs to be had, and ultimately what we're left with is a waste of a decent concept.

**Steve Wright**



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## FILM INFO

**Released**

Out now

**Year Made**

1993-2002

**Certificate**

18

**Creator**

Chris Carter

**Cast**

Gillian Anderson, David Duchovny, Mitch Pileggi, William B Davis

**Distributor**

Fox

**Running Time**

8,977 mins

**Format**



## ON THE ROAD TO FAME

**5 best X-Files guest stars**

**Ryan Reynolds**

The future star of a million comic-book adaptations played Jay 'Boom' De Boom, a doomed football player.

**Jack Black**

The actor played Giovanni Ribisi's best friend, who pays the price for befriending a guy who controls electricity.

**Luke Wilson**

In arguably the best episode ever, he is a southern Sheriff who is either handsome and charming or buck-toothed and stupid. And maybe a vampire.

**Lucy Lawless**

She was supposed to be a recurring guest star, but appeared in just two episodes as a bad-ass super soldier.

**Seth Green**

The *Robot Chicken* creator plays an alien-spotting stoner, and helps to show a lighter side to Mulder, who's amused by him.



**Complete Seasons 1-9**

# THE X-FILES

**The truth is in here**

**You don't need** us to tell you how important *The X-Files* was. It had a huge impact on the shape of the genre landscape, a supernatural procedural that inspired *Buffy The Vampire Slayer*, *Supernatural*, *Fringe*, *Sleepy Hollow* and a million other shows that no one remembers. It gave us two of sci-fi's biggest icons in the form of wry believer Fox Mulder (David Duchovny) and sceptical badass Dana Scully (Gillian Anderson), and provided its viewers with endless nightmares and conspiracy theory fuel. Now, it's available in beautiful high definition in Fox's Blu-ray box set, which comes with a little space for the new revival series.

But do you really need to shell out for a new box set? The short answer is yes. First of all, because the restoration looks stunning (although we kind of agree with the quibble that looking too crisp does occasionally hurt the show's murky atmosphere), but mostly because during its best seasons the show was absolutely essential. Even the worst seasons have something to offer.

One of the pleasures of rewatching is being reminded of the incredible writing talent involved. *Breaking Bad* creator Vince Gilligan is arguably MVP, but Howard Gordon, John Shiban, James Wong, Glen Morgan and Darin Morgan all created superb hours of television, while Chris Carter and Frank Spotnitz steered the

ship through its increasingly complicated and inevitably daft overall mythology.

Although fans will tell you that the mythology had gone to pot long before the finale rolled around, it's great to go back and be reminded of just how good it is at the start. From the smoke-filled FBI offices to Mulder's meetings with shady government operatives, it's incredibly gripping stuff, helped by superb performances from Duchovny and the supporting cast, including Jerry Hardin's charming Deep Throat and Steven William's glowering Mr X. It's absolutely compelling, and holds up even though that zeitgeist has long since passed.

Then there are the monsters. With the possible exception of *Buffy*, no TV show has offered monster-of-the-week episodes this brilliant. How many series can boast creatures as terrifying as Eugene Victor Tooms by its third episode? By the time the show really hits its stride with the second and third season, the writers had found a near-perfect balance between its arc plot and its monsters of the week. Indeed, sometimes the mythology could be every bit as terrifying as the serial killers, fluke men and body-fat devourers. Just look at the 'Duane Barry' arc, in which Mulder races to save Scully from an alien abductee.

Speaking of Scully, there's a good reason why her and Mulder became such a big part of popular culture, and it's largely due to the fact that Duchovny and Anderson

work so well together. Their chemistry is immediately evident, and watching their relationship develop over the course of the show and seeing them becoming increasingly comfortable bouncing off each other is an absolute joy. Anderson deserves even more praise because the quality of her work never dips, even when Duchovny visibly wanted out of the show during the rickety seventh season.

The introduction of Robert Patrick's John Doggett also works better than you might remember, finally allowing Scully to be the believer, and the actor gives the show a real shot in the arm. Annabeth Gish's Monica Reyes remains a serious misstep, but to be honest there's so much wrong with Season Nine that it's hard to pin the blame on her. Carter's attempt to keep the show going after Duchovny's departure could have worked, but it's sadly fumbled.

But why focus on Season Nine when there's so much goodness here? This is one of the best TV shows ever, finally available in HD.

**Jonathan Hatfull**

SciFiNow scored **9** for  
The X-Files: The Complete Set

Follow our scores on **JUST A SCORE**

## IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...

**Millennium**  
Chris Carter's much darker show is an underrated piece of horror TV, with an excellent lead turn from Lance Henriksen.





Series Nine

# DOCTOR WHO

Wait...sonic sunglasses?

SciFiNow  
Must  
see now!

**Details** 12 // 600 mins // **DVD** • **Blu-ray** // Out now **Creator** Steven Moffat **Cast** Peter Capaldi, Jenna Coleman, Michelle Gomez, Maisie Williams **Distributor** BBC



After a season of new challenges being faced and old faces leaving, Series Nine emerged as a decidedly strong one for *Doctor Who*, despite some fairly major wobbles.

Frankly, we don't believe that anyone had any lingering doubts about Peter Capaldi's suitability as the Time Lord after his brilliant work in Series Eight, but this year sees him really come into his own. Watching his relationship with Jenna Coleman's Clara develop is one of the series' real pleasures, helping to propel the show through some of the ropier episodes. The inevitable result of their partnership becoming so strong is the fact that Clara's much-hyped departure was genuinely moving, and Coleman will definitely be missed.

Helping Series Nine to stand apart from the pack was the decision to tell the bulk of the season as two-parters. Although it does mean that some stories that didn't really work stuck around for longer than they should have (Toby Whithouse's 'Under The Lake'/'Before The Flood' got off to a cracking start before losing its way in the second half, as did 'The Girl Who Died'/'The Woman Who Lived'), it also meant that stories got room to breathe.

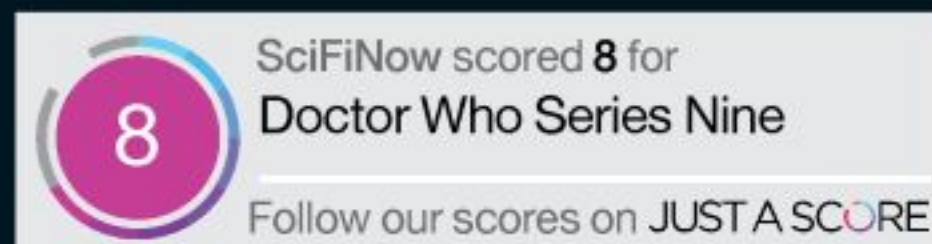
The Zygon two-parter is some of the most compelling *Who* we've

seen in years, culminating in an incredible Capaldi monologue and allowing the Doctor to deliver the kind of humanitarian message that recalled the best of the Jon Pertwee era. Although series opener 'The Magician's Apprentice' isn't great, the double act of Clara and Michelle Gomez's Missy in 'The Witch's Familiar' is absolutely wonderful, and it's important to single out Maisie Williams' Ashildr/Me for praise, who becomes more and more impressive as the series goes on.

Some episodes may have divided audiences (Mark Gatiss' 'Sleep No More' seemingly split everyone down the middle, although we love the ending), but when you've got brilliant hours of television like 'Heaven Sent' (which stranded the Doctor alone and under attack, with superb direction from Rachel Talaly, who's increasingly becoming the show's MVP director) it's tough to quibble.

It has a rocky start, but Series Nine rewards your patience, leaving the Doctor in an interesting place.

**Jonathan Hatfull**



## IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...



**Rick And Morty**  
This *Who*-inspired animation is definitely not for kids, but is certainly hilarious and brilliant.



SciFiNow  
Must  
see now!

# DOCTOR WHO: THE HUSBANDS OF RIVER SONG

Lost River

**Details** 12 // 60 mins // **DVD** • **Blu-ray** // 25 January **Creator** Steven Moffat **Cast** Peter Capaldi, Alex Kingston, Greg Davies, Matt Lucas **Distributor** 2entertain



## While most shows

embrace the festive season as a chance to enjoy a non sequitur romp in which the main

characters down tools from whatever drama they've been engaged in, Moffat-era *Doctor Who* has traditionally done no such thing. Rather, these episodes are part epilogue, part moving-on tale, allowing the Doctor to come to terms with recent trauma.

In this case, the Doctor (Peter Capaldi) is still clearly still not at all used to being alone after Clara's departure. However, he isn't given a chance to mope, being pretty much instantly dragged off to a medical emergency involving genocidal tyrant/literal talking head King Hydroflax (Greg Davies) – who also happens to be the husband of a certain River Song (Alex Kingston), although River being River, there is obviously an ulterior motive behind every ulterior motive, and she's definitely not telling – at least initially.

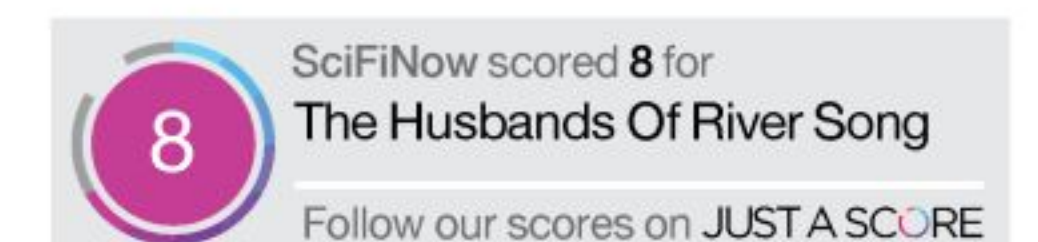
Love her or hate her, there's no denying that River has been one of

the more memorable *Who* creations of recent years, and it's good to see a familiar face – particularly from the Doctor's perspective, who could definitely do with a laugh.

Moreover, it's nice to see that River's dynamic with the Time Lord transcends incarnations, having spent fun times with both David Tennant and Matt Smith. Kingston's usual bombast collides with Capaldi's understated but nailed-on comic timing to great effect, and at times it's an absolute treat to watch. Combined with a hilarious turn from Davies (regularly the best thing about all the various panel shows he appears on), and you have one of the funniest *Who* Xmas specials of recent times.

Granted, it's still wordy – shut off for a second and you'll get lost – but there's a reward in all this. 'The Husbands Of River Song' acts as a fitting coda to the Doctor and River's relationship while still giving hope that this isn't the last we'll see of her. Capaldi hasn't always had the stories he deserves, but when he gets them, he shines – like he does here.

**Steve Wright**



## IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...



**Doctor Who: Last Christmas**  
Nick Frost becomes Saint Nick in one of the better *Who* specials of recent years.







Season Five

# FALLING SKIES

The sky is over

**Details** 15 // 424 mins // **Out now** **Creator** Robert Rodat **Cast** Noah Wyle, Moon Bloodgood, Drew Roy, Sarah Carter **Distributor** Warner Home Video



## Five seasons is

not to be sniffed at for a TV series nowadays, and *Falling Skies* can be proud of itself for lasting this long. That

being said, Season Five's effectiveness as a culmination of the series will likely garner mixed opinions from fans.

Things kick off by returning resistance leader Tom Mason (Noah Wyle) to Earth post-Moon mission with a more optimistic outlook and ruthless approach to battling the Espheni. Frequently directed by incoming showrunner Olatunde Osunsanmi, the series somehow becomes more action-packed, if that was even possible, with the invading aliens defending every inch of land while they fall back in the face of renewed human assaults.

However, it all feels a little too easy. As one character points out, all the Masons are still standing, and while the final season usually represents to the best opportunity to both ratchet up the tension and off major characters, you never really get a sense that *Falling Skies'* first family are in any danger. The usual range of supporting characters

get bumped off, and there are a few sad moments for semi-regular characters, but the lack of high stakes is sometimes at odds with the series' tone.

Even so, there are also some good attempts at injecting something new into the mix – which again are hit and miss. 'Everybody Has Their Reasons', which sees the 2nd Mass encountering an army unit who might not be what they seem lands squarely in *Invasion Of The Body Snatchers* territory (we mean that in a good way), while 'Pope Breaks Bad', as the title suggests, turns the show's popular antihero into an unambiguous bad guy. Colin Cunningham's performance sells it, but it's still a shame to see one of our favourite characters go down a route that there's no return from, especially considering the development of his personality in the preceding seasons.

Coupled with the rushed ending, and you get the feeling that this is a show that finished just as it ran out of ideas. Even so, it benefits from the resolution that many shows don't get, and sits comfortably and competently in the Spielberg TV pantheon.

**Steve Wright**

SciFiNow scored **6** for *Falling Skies* Season Five

Follow our scores on [JUST A SCORE](#)

## IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...

**Taken**  
Another Spielberg show, you should definitely take time for this alien-invasion miniseries.



Season Two

SciFiNow  
Must see now!

# THE RETURNED

They came back... again

**Details** 15 // 480 mins // **Out now** **Creator** Fabrice Gobert **Cast** Anne Consigny, Clotilde Hesme, Celine Sallette **Distributor** Universal Pictures UK



**Beguiling, mysterious and unyielding,** Series One of *The Returned* was unlike anything else we'd seen on

television (despite the inevitable *Twin Peaks* comparisons that are made whenever something remotely eerie is aired). It's been three years in the making, but we're glad to report that Series Two was worth the wait.

Taking place six months after the Series One finale, which saw the town flooded after the damn bursts and the returned seemingly disappearing, people are still struggling to pick up the pieces. Lena (Jenna Thiam) and Jérôme (Frédéric Pierrot) search for the missing Camille (Yara Pilartz) and Claire (Anne Consigny), young Victor (Swann Nambotin) continues to be mysterious, and even more dead people come back to life, leading to additional conflicts, resurfacing of deliberately repressed memories and heartrending moments.

*The Returned's* formula is a hard one to recreate (indeed, no less than two English-language remakes have attempted and failed this very task), but it somehow works. As much is left unspoken as it is articulated, and no scene is wasted. This is a show that demands 100 per cent of your attention at all

times, and anything less lessens the viewing experience. Whether it's Adele (Clotilde Hesme) refusing to peer beneath the blanket that covers her dead ex-husband, or serial killer Serge (Guillaume Gouix) looking on in horror as his victims return in person to silently haunt him, there are more than enough memorable moments to keep you watching.

Even if you're paying attention, however, it can be an unforgiving watch at time. With one of the largest ensemble casts this side of *Game Of Thrones*, following the story's events and remembering exactly who's who isn't always the easiest of tasks, and the ending, while offering a surprising amount of resolution and explanation, won't necessarily be the one that people want.

Even so, this is intelligent, rewarding fantasy drama of a kind that is all-too uncommon on TV, and we're glad to have it back for what is most likely its swansong.

**Steve Wright**

SciFiNow scored **8** for *The Returned* Season Two

Follow our scores on [JUST A SCORE](#)

## IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...

**The Leftovers**  
*The Returned* in reverse, this concerns people's loved ones suddenly disappearing.





Series One

# JEKYLL AND HYDE

Half a monster

SciFiNow  
Must see now!

**Details** 12 // 600 mins // **DVD** // Out now **Creator** Charlie Higson **Cast** Tom Bateman, Stephanie Hyam, Natalie Gumede, Enzo Cilenti, Donald Sumpter, Richard E Grant  
**Distributor** ITV Studios Home Entertainment



**Robert Louis Stevenson's** *Strange Case Of Dr Jekyll & Mr Hyde* deserves its place as one of our most

popular gothic novels. Indeed, it has spawned numerous imitations, ranging from the monstrous, homicidal Hyde of *League Of Extraordinary Gentlemen* to James Nesbitt's more human portrayal in ITV's *Jekyll*. Here, the studio has gone light-hearted, turning Hyde into more of an antihero than the receptacle for all things nasty that the source material depicted him as.

As can be expected, Jekyll/Hyde (Tom Bateman) draws the attention of monster club Tenebrae, led by the sadistic Captain Dance (Enzo Cilenti), and a mysterious government agency helmed by the shady Sir Robert Bulstrode (Richard E Grant), all the while Jekyll attempts to find a cure for his condition, falling alternately for pretty student Lily (Stephanie Hyam) and nightclub owner Bella (Natalie Gumede). Pair in a number of strong supporting

cast members (most notably Donald Sumpter as the original Jekyll's assistant), and you have no shortage of acting talent on show.

Creator Charlie Higson has a strong flair for both comedy and drama, and these twin-talents both rise to the fore. Hyde isn't that much of a bastard here, making him easy to route for, and his supernaturally enhanced strength is frequently played for laughs. Also working in the show's favour is its unpredictability – the direction it is heading in is never made clear, and some of the twists are genuinely unexpected – as is the surprising amount of none-to-subtle innuendo that is present.

With an ending that leaves things open for a second season, it would be a shame to see things finish here, especially with the TV universe allowing for more storytelling potential via the existence of additional monsters. We're certainly surprised that we enjoyed *Jekyll And Hyde* as much as we did, but it's definitely a welcome one at that.

**Steve Wright**

SciFiNow scored **8** for  
**Jekyll And Hyde Series One**  
Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...



**Merlin**  
In a land of myth and a time of magic, discover the BBC's joyous retelling of Arthurian Legend.



Season Two

# DOMINION

Divine slight

**Details** 15 // 780 mins // **DVD** // March 7 **Creator** Vaun Wilmott **Cast** Christopher Egan, Tom Wisdom, Carl Beukes, Roxanne McKee, Anthony Head, Alan Dale  
**Distributor** Universal Pictures UK



**No matter how** good a show is, sometimes the struggle to escape its associated baggage can prove to be too much.

Take *Dominion*, for instance. Essentially a series-length sequel to Scott Stewart's disappointingly bland feature film *Legion*, it's much better than the source material suggests, but considering its cancellation it seems that guilt by association is still a thing.

This is a shame, because as fans will testify, there's a lot to like about the series. For a start, there is real, genuine character development, with everyone having moved on almost beyond recognition since the premiere. Alex (Christopher Egan) has wilfully gone over to the side of the bad angels, led by the homicidal Gabriel (Carl Beukes) in order to keep the city of New Vega safe; pampered president's daughter Claire (Roxanne McKee) has become the formidable leader of the city; David (Anthony Head) has gone from conniving schemer to broken and paranoid, while Michael (Tom Wisdom)

has abandoned his task of protecting Alex, disillusioned with mankind.

With the stakes already heaven-high, it's hard to see how they can rise any more, but somehow they do. Characters you might have dismissed as one-note develop new shades, and there are some truly surprising twists in the tale. Not all the characterisation is consistently strong though, and the experience of the more seasoned performers – Head and Alan Dale in particular – sometimes serves to highlight the other cast members' relative lack thereof, but there is enough going on to mean this doesn't matter as much.

It's not a flawless story by any means, but it never stands still, constantly trying new things and reinventing itself. It's a trait that other genre shows could do with emulating, and it only makes it even more of a shame that this won't get a third year, despite the fact that it definitely deserves one. The final cliffhanger – destined never to be resolved – will only serve as yet another reminder of a show not getting its just desserts.

**Steve Wright**

SciFiNow scored **7** for  
**Dominion Season Two**  
Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...



**Defiance**  
Syfy's sci-fi drama finds a very different Earth in the wake of various alien arrivals.



## GHOSTBUSTERS

Publisher: Cryptozoic Entertainment //  
Players: 1-4 // RRP: £69.99

**G**hostbusters is another Kickstarter success story that is now available on general release. After being unable to get the licence to work as a card game, Cryptozoic threw caution to the wind and launched its bold idea on Kickstarter. After asking for \$250,000, the game went on to receive a staggering \$1,546,269.

It is a cooperative game, and also episodic, with each campaign typically consisting of four connected scenarios. Add in the fact that there are three campaigns with the ability to create your own, and *Ghostbusters* offers excellent value for money, even at its high price.

Gameplay is relatively straightforward, with each Ghostbuster being able to take one of two actions (with a third being available upon reaching level 3 or higher). Actions include movement, driving the Ecto-1, depositing trapped ghosts, removing slime from an adjacent Ghostbuster or entering into combat. The modulated board pieces are multi-sided, combining to create a large number of maps, and they feature numerous hazards that they must negotiate. Ghosts aren't blocked in the

### 1 BOARD

The board is modular and double-sided, allowing for numerous configurations.

### 2 CHARACTER CARDS

Each Ghostbuster has unique skills and abilities with a marker to show current experience and level.

### 5 GATES

You need to try and close these down when applicable to stop ghosts arriving.

### 6 GHOSTS

There are three different classes of base ghosts: Galloping Ghoul, Gruesome Twosome and Boogaloo Manifestation. Unfortunately, as they're all the same colour they're tough to tell apart.

### 7 BOSSES

There are three main bosses: Slimer, Idulnas and The Marshmallow Man. Needless to say, they're all really tough to defeat.

### 3 SLIME TOKENS

Multipliers stack, so make sure slime is removed as quickly as possible.

### 4 ECTO-1

The Ecto-1 can carry Ghostbusters and more around the map more quickly. You can heal yourself or fight monsters though.

### 8 DICE

The eight-sided die manages movement and the six-sided die is used in combat. The remaining die handles events.



same way, meaning a fair amount of teamwork is required to successfully trap them.

Ghostbusters can also attack the gates that appear on the map. The gates allow more ghosts to enter our world, which increases the overall difficulty of the game. At the end of the round, a special Event Die is rolled that activates different things. It inevitably results in more ghosts appearing.

Every Ghostbuster has unique abilities to increase as the game continues and they gain experience. Venkman acts as a tank, gaining XP points whenever he's slimed. Stantz, on the other hand, receives XP for removing slime from other Ghostbusters, essentially making him a healer. Spengler uses his tech skills to re-roll numerous die, while Zeddemore is the best at bagging ghosts, and can eventually boost the morale of the other Ghostbusters. All the skills work extremely well, while staying true to the spirit of the original characters.

*Ghostbusters* is everything you wanted. It features high production values, there's a huge amount of content, and the game stays true to the source material. Like many co-op games, the odds are stacked against you, but the challenge isn't unfair. It is an excellent board game that will appeal to anyone.

**BEST FOR: ACTION FANS**

## 9 SCENARIO CARDS

These show the scenario objectives and rules on one side and the map layouts on the other.

## 10 PKE METER

This tile determines where ghosts appear when they came through a gate.

## 11 PROTON STREAM TOKENS

These are added to a ghost every time you hit them. Each ghost needs a certain amount before they can be captured.

## TOP FIVE

### MAGIC: THE GATHERING BATTLE FOR ZENDIKAR



1. GIDEON, ALLY OF ZENDIKAR £32



2. ULAMOG, THE CEASELESS HUNGER £20



3. DRANA, LIBERATOR OF MALAKIR £10



4. OB NIXILIS REIGNITED £8



5. UNDERGROWTH CHAMPION £7

## Star Wars X-Wing The Force Awakens

Publisher: Fantasy Flight Games // Players: 2 // RRP: £29.99

Don't be fooled into thinking that this is a cheap repaint of the original core set, as there is more than enough here to justify a new purchase.

The rulebook has been greatly refined, making it a

lot easier to understand than previous incarnations, and the damage deck has also been more fairly balanced. There are new pilot cards, and the ships are stronger than those present in the *X-Wing* core set, while there are new missions and upgraded cards.

Gameplay-wise it's identical, so you plan your moves with the unique manoeuvre dials and use markers to show how fast your ship is moving.

Once you've made your moves in secret, you reveal them with the aim of hopefully outflanking your opponent so you can open fire and in the process score

some easy hits before your opponent does.

*The Force Awakens* is a far more powerful core set than the original, but not so much that it makes earlier ships from the game underpowered. Everything feels nicely balanced, but like the original core set, it still feels like it needs double the ships to make for a more exciting base product.

It's a worthy upgrade to your existing fleet of ships, and a brilliant starting point for anyone who has ever been interested in trying out Fantasy Flight's game. For those wanting to 're-enact' their favourite scenes, it is a must-have.

**BEST FOR: STAR WARS FANS**

## Mistfall

Publisher: NSKN Games // Players: 1-4 // RRP: £44.99

Choose your unique hero and then work with others to solve the quests in this entertaining card-based cooperative game.

*Mistfall* is unique every time you play, because the modular pieces allow for different board layouts. The characters are also completely different, each having unique decks that allow for a range of powerful weapons and abilities. One nice touch is that heroes can often combo off each other, giving the impression that you're working together to take out the game's varied and vicious monsters.

The game is split into seven distinct phases, including Hero, Time, Reinforcement, Travel, Pursuit, Defence and Encounter. Reinforcement adds new enemies; Travel allows you to move to a new location; Pursuit sees enemies attack; while the Hero phase lets your character take a number of actions. All the phases gel together well, and don't bog the gameplay down too much. The Time phase is particularly important in *Mistfall*, as the players lose if they don't complete their quest in a specific number of turns. Players can also die by



running out of cards, which is surprisingly easy to do.

*Mistfall* is a great twist on the standard cooperative game, and is only let down by a hard-to-understand rulebook.

**BEST FOR: FANTASY FANS**

## Expansion Of The Month LEGENDARY: GUARDIANS OF THE GALAXY

Publisher: Upper Deck // Players: 1-5 // RRP: £16.88

This is an excellent addition to the core *Legendary* base set. The 100-card set features all five playable heroes from the popular series, and they integrate extremely well into the original base set. Rocket and Drax are easily the highlights, but all five heroes are well balanced, and are complemented by stunning new art. It introduces new mechanics, including Shard tokens and Artifact cards, and also includes a new villain group called Infinity



Gems, which represent Thanos himself. *Guardians Of The Galaxy* is a great expansion pack, but it's one that works best with the Marvel core set, as opposed to Upper Decks' later *Alien* and *Predator* games.

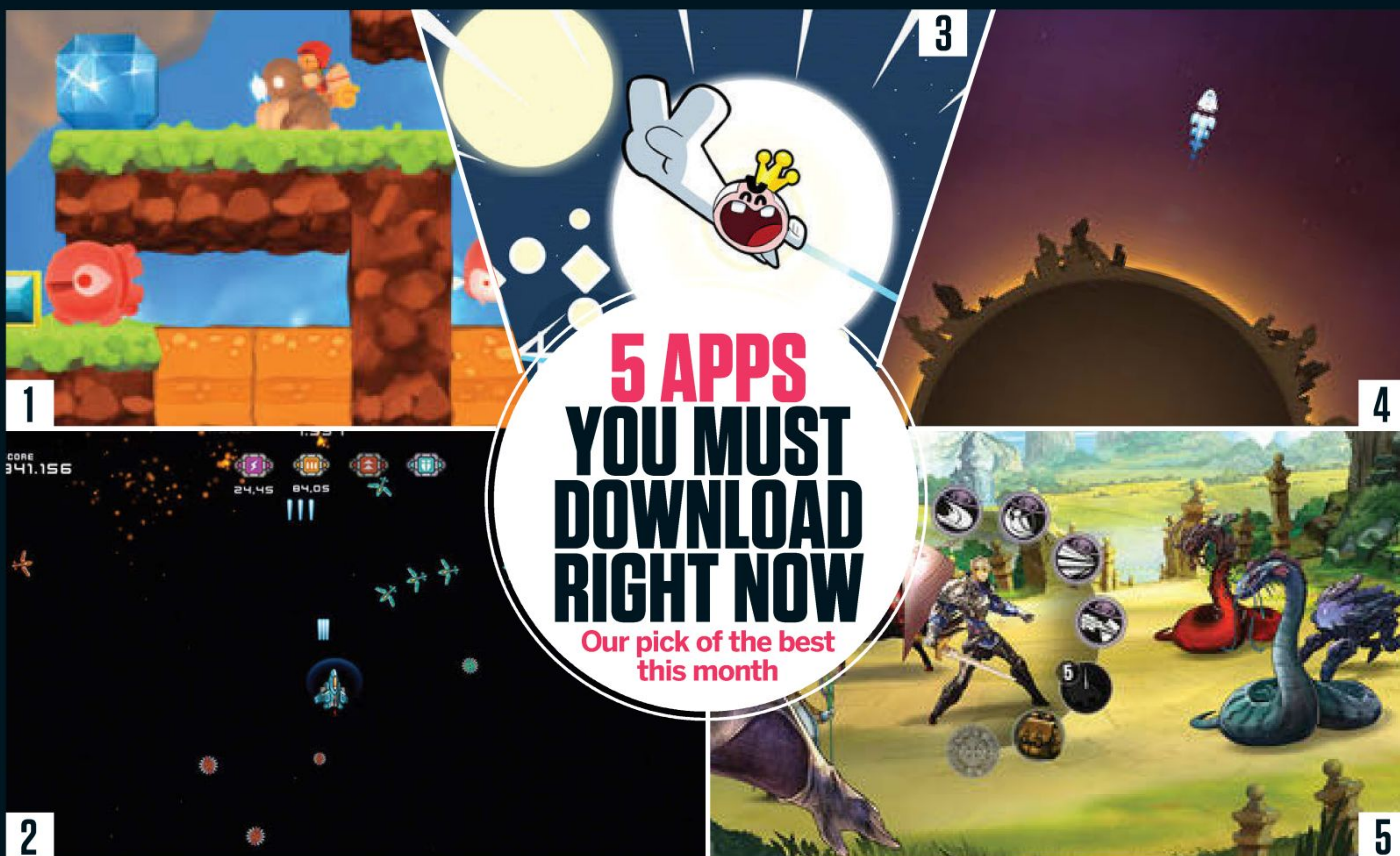
## Do You Remember? SCOOPY DOO HAUNTED HOUSE 3D BOARD GAME

Better than a plate of Scooby Snacks

While it was aimed at younger children, *Haunted House* was still a lot of fun. It's essentially a *Scooby Doo* update of the MB classic *Ghost Castle*, with the gang trying to reach the ghost found at the top of the house so that they can unmask it. The ghost won't go down easily, and could activate various traps, which would hinder the players. Hazards ranged from a shaky staircase to a moose head, and getting hit meant starting over from a set point. The spin and play nature meant it wasn't the deepest game, but it's still great fun for those that love *Scooby Doo*.







## STARLIT ADVENTURE

FOR: IOS/ANDROID  
PRICE: FREE



**1** Bo and Kikki need your help! The evil Nuru has stolen the stars, and they need assistance finding them and putting them back. Work your way towards becoming the greatest Starkeeper with this fun platformer. Test your skills with brain-teasing puzzles and daring duels, and explore worlds with the hope of collecting treasures. Constant challenges, heaps of levels and the ability to play and rank against your friends make *Starlit Adventure* the perfect app.

**BEST FOR: DAYDREAM BELIEVERS**



## COSMOS – INFINITE SPACE

FOR: IOS  
PRICE: £2.29/\$2.99



**2** There's not much else as simultaneously relaxing and stressful than a good old-fashioned arcade shooter, and *nothing* else better than not having to stand up to go and find one. With three different difficulty settings to choose from, space-shooter *Cosmos* is for everyone. The best part is you can also play it with your Apple TV remote so you don't even really need to raise your hands.

**BEST FOR: LAZY SHOOTERS**



## KING TONGUE

FOR: IOS  
PRICE: £1.49/\$1.99



**3** Thousands of heavily armed bananas have invaded your territory since the Banana King declared war. As *King Tongue*, it's up to you to rally your best monkey troops and fight back. And the best of everything you've got is your giant, powerful, grapple hook-like tongue. All of Bananaland fear your godly tongue and the power it beholds. *King Tongue* is definitely a bit strange, but it's also fun, demanding, plentiful and 100 per cent playable offline.

**BEST FOR: MAD MONKEYS**



## LAST HORIZON

FOR: IOS/ANDROID  
PRICE: £2.29/\$2.99



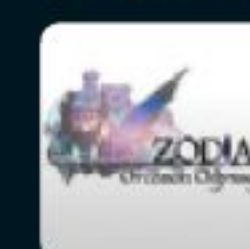
**4** This space survival and exploration game from Pixeljam is a must for anyone who appreciates unique aesthetics in their sci-fi gaming. The graphics, soundtrack and concept create a game quite unlike anything you have played before. The aim is to survive: a spaceship full of people sets sail through space to search of somewhere to call home. Careful planning and distribution of fuel, oxygen and integrity are key to prospering this far from Earth.

**BEST FOR: SPACE SURVIVORS**



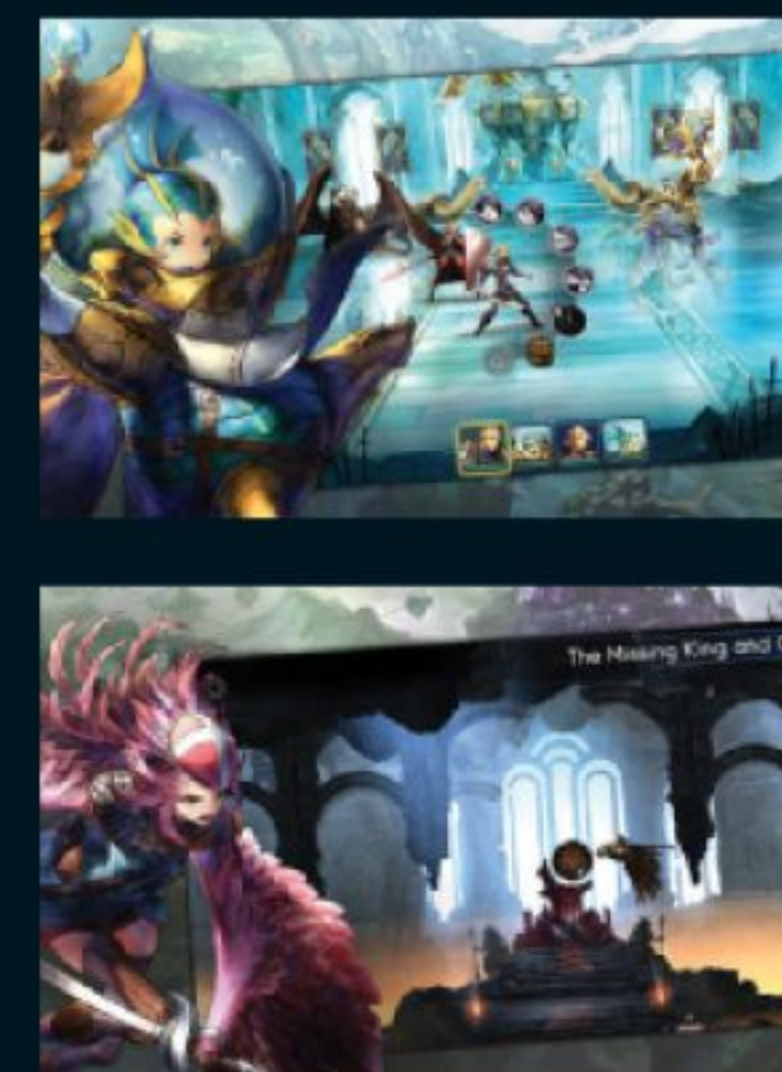
## ZODIAC: ORCANON ODYSSEY

FOR: IOS  
PRICE: £6.99/\$8.99



**5** Hero Cael is taken on a whirlwind quest when he touches one of the Celestial Shards, and his life is changed. This is episode one of the *Zodiac* saga, and there's more to come. The stylised art, rich storyline dreamt up by *Final Fantasy* writer Kazushige Nojima and enchanting music from composer Hitoshi Sakimoto make *Zodiac: Orcanon Odyssey* one not to be missed.

**BEST FOR: FINAL FANTASY FREAKS**







82 Essential Read:

# Cloud Atlas

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**BOOK CLUB**

Essential Read

**“I LIKE TO USE  
GENRE AS A  
TOOL, LIKE STYLE,  
STRUCTURE OR A  
CHARACTER”**

DAVID MITCHELL

# Essential read: **Cloud Atlas**

David Mitchell's breakout novel traces multiple lives across centuries and combines postmodern structure with genre tropes. But *Cloud Atlas* was only the beginning

WORDS MATTHEW HANDRAHAN

“Even if it turned out to be a failure, I thought, then it would be a valiant failure, full of successes.” And so David Mitchell agreed to let Lana and Andy Wachowski, the creators of *The Matrix*, and Tom Tykwer, of *Run Lola Run*, attempt to do what many believed impossible: adapt *Cloud Atlas* for the big screen. Opinions on whether the results justified the effort vary almost as wildly as the film's tone, but there was certainly a degree of success. Within a few weeks of the first trailer being released, Mitchell's novel became one of the ten best-selling books in the US.

“At one point, there were two *Shades Of Grey* books, and then this eight-year-old Russian doll of a novel by some British bloke nobody's

ever heard of,” Mitchell later said to the *Guardian*, and it's scarcely an exaggeration. First published in 2004, *Cloud Atlas* is an elliptically structured postmodern novel featuring multiple protagonists driving narratives set centuries apart. It is a thriller, a mystery, a historical novel, a sci-fi, a story about the very act of telling stories, and ultimately a warning. Displays of postmodern virtuosity by (relatively) obscure young writers aren't generally stocked in airports and train stations, and yet *Cloud Atlas* found itself in that abundantly read company. Despite being just 35, Mitchell's writing offered equal nourishment to both head and heart. Critics and the public were united in their admiration.

And yet language was a troublesome subject for Mitchell. He first spoke when he was five, and by the age of seven he had developed a stammer. Even as he was swept away by the words of Ursula K Le Guin's *Earthsea* novels he was often too cautious to say any of his own, all too aware of the teasing that might ensue should he stumble on a hard C or a quarrelsome K. It was difficult, but the struggle to mask his stammer offered the first glimpse of writerly skill. Speaking to the *New York Times*, Mitchell referred to his stammer as “an effective if merciless boot-camp instructor,” forcing him to rethink every sentence, swapping out problem words. His vocabulary swelled.





The all-star cast of the film adaptation includes Jim Broadbent and Ben Whishaw.

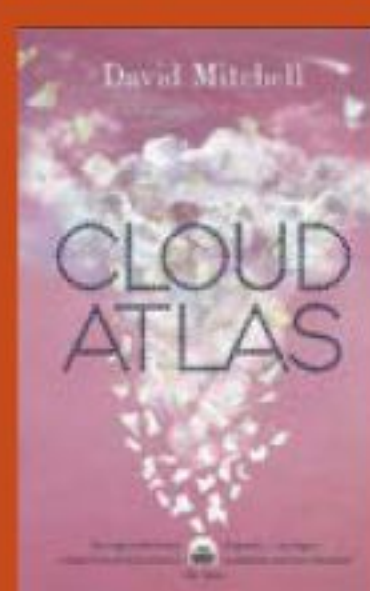
“My stammer also taught me about register,” he said. “What I didn’t know at the time was how linguistic register helps a novelist flesh out character and lends authenticity to dialogue or narrated thought... What feels like a curse when you’re younger can prove to be a long-term ally.”

By the time Mitchell was studying Comparative Literature at the University of Kent, he had such a deft and imaginative way with words that his teacher, Jan Montefiore, was stunned. Even the playful stories Mitchell dashed off when he babysat her sons radiated skill. “One of these days I’m going to boast about having had you as a student,” she once told him.

That would take several years, a period during which Mitchell travelled as widely as his resources allowed. He stayed for extended periods in Nepal, India and Sicily, relishing the experience of “being the lonely foreigner, of exploring someone else’s city until my feet ached, strangers going home to dinner.” He discovered lifestyles and beliefs that scarcely resembled those he knew, an invigorating experience that only intensified when he moved to Hiroshima, Japan as an English teacher. Mitchell’s head was filling up with new characters. That much is evident from one of his first attempts at writing a novel: *The Old Moon*, a story with dozens of characters powering as many sub-plots, inelegantly divided into just 365 characters. Rejection letters flowed from every publisher he contacted, save one agent, Mike Shaw, who considered *The Old Moon* intriguing enough for



Andy and Lana Wachowski co-directed the movie.



## SYNOPSIS

In 1850, Adam Ewing observes the native people of the Chatham Islands, and has a fateful encounter with a Moriori slave. In 1931, an English

musician departs his lover to assist a dying composer with his final work. In 1975, an American journalist encounters corruption and murder when investigating an unsafe power-plant. In the present day, a publisher takes flight from a dangerous client and finds himself trapped in a nursing home. Some time in the future, a clone assembled for menial work by the Korean government becomes embroiled in a rebellion. In the 24th Century, the valley folk of Hawaii confront artefacts left by the ‘Old Uns’ – the people who once dominated Earth, the people whose world came to an end.

These lives, separated by centuries, are connected. “Our lives are not our own. We are bound to others, past and present, and by each crime and every kindness, we birth our future.”

closer inspection. When Mitchell’s next book was ready, Shaw said he wanted to see it.

That novel, *Ghostwritten*, was assembled from individual stories, many of which Mitchell completed while travelling from China to Europe via the Trans-Siberian Railway. Each chapter had its own protagonist moving through their own story in a different part of the world, bound together by a loose connection to larger events. This time, Mitchell had no problems finding a publisher, and it ultimately received the 1999 John Llewellyn Rhys Prize, awarded to the best work of literature by an author under the age of 35.

So many of the elements that make *Cloud Atlas* distinctive are right there in *Ghostwritten*, with one notable exception: a sense of purpose. Deep down, Mitchell considered himself to be a “plot and character guy,” but his disregard for conventional structure meant he was often described as “experimental” – a word that Mitchell lamented to *The Guardian* as “arid and forbidding.” The real purpose of having myriad characters, plotlines and settings, Mitchell thought, should be to shine a light on that which changes and that which stays the same.

“It allows me to examine change,” he later told *The Atlantic*. “It’s invisible, like the wind, but you can see its effects when a tornado blows through. The way my books are – spectra across time, across cultures – perhaps allows me to render visible things that are normally invisible or non-tangible, and focus on things that defy focus, perhaps.”

In *Cloud Atlas*, that thing would be power, and the way the strong wield it to gain power over the weak. He had witnessed that tendency early in life as a “stammering 13-year-old schoolkid, not good at sports, not good at making people laugh, not good at anything.” His experiences while travelling had only established it as a distinctly human trait, very much in our nature. If the human condition was the Periodic Table, Mitchell once said, Power would take the place of Oxygen, the third most abundant element. Only Love and Death would be more vital to its composition, but Power was more potentially ruinous than either.

“The reason why humanity has become so successful, our unbelievable capacity for rapacity, the same greed that propelled us out of the trees in the central African plains, the same greed that made us explore and spread our species all over the planet,” he said in an interview with KCRW’s *Bookworm* podcast. “Unless we can do something about substantially altering that greed, ➤



The narratives in *Cloud Atlas* are cyclical, each linked in some way.





## Your Take On The Classic

WHAT YOU THOUGHT  
@SCIFINOW



"I wrote 15,000 words on it for my dissertation. A book about ascent/descent- a theme that permeates every story. I love AND hate it" @DomPeppiatt



"Cloud Atlas is truly wonderful. David Mitchell astonishes with every book, but this is by far his best."

#BookClub" @LeachJuice



"Loved the film, really couldn't follow the book"

@GrahamTaylor69



"Watched the film 2 yrs back, it was great movie but unfortunately not read the book yet, guess its even better"

@KikiAbir



"Felt it climaxed in the centre so each stories end felt slightly more diminished than the previous. However, enjoyed it overall."

@steveduffin



"I haven't yet read the book (its in the pile) but the movie was one of my favourites"

@Rekeiji



"The very different styles of each section are so clever. A very difficult but massively impressive read. Loved the adaptation too!"

@bookvsfilmclub



"I have some kind of Stockholm Syndrome relationship with the chapter 'Sloosha's crossin an ev'rythin after'."

@carkamok



"A captivating pyramid of stories that flow organically one into the next."

@salsashark1988



"It's really my favourite and inspired me to write novels. Was so impressed by its wide scope of characters, genres and time zones."

@jhenrybenmore



"I've not read the book but I <3 the film. Lovely relationship/love piece across time without tech getting in the way of story."

@Amenthea



"Cloud Atlas was a good one... the message was that certain qualities transcend gender."

@LibraryTasha

What do you think? Let us know on Twitter or Facebook

# "THAT'S MY LIFE'S WORK, FOR HOWEVER LONG MY LIFE LASTS"

DAVID MITCHELL



Before becoming an author, Mitchell worked as a teacher in Hiroshima.

➤ that same greed will kill us. As a species it will drive us back up the trees... *Cloud Atlas* had the lofty aim of seeking to be a warning."

And like so many authors wishing to comprehensively explore such huge and fundamental ideas, Mitchell found his story entering what many regard as the realm of science fiction. The novel's driving idea demanded a timeline that spanned centuries, starting far in the past and, more importantly, stretching far into the future, where the consequences of humanity's refusal to confront its nature could be laid bare. "There's probably only one way to write a given novel in my head," he told *Bookworm*, "and *Cloud Atlas* turned out this way."

Unlike most literary authors wishing to explore huge and fundamental ideas, however, Mitchell performed no logical gymnastics to distance his book from associations with genre. In addition to Le Guin, his teenage reading involved a great deal of "colourfully jacketed science fiction." Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*, Yevgeny Zamyatin's *We* and EM Forster's *The Machine Stops* all informed his approach to sections of *Cloud Atlas*. In doing so, Mitchell saw himself as part of a long-standing and – to his mind – admirable tradition of literary and speculative fiction colliding. Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*, Haruki Murakami's *The Wind Up Bird Chronicle*, Philip Roth's *The Plot Against America*; These novels played

with genre, whether their authors cared to acknowledge the fact or not.

"I like to use genre as a tool, like style, structure or a character," he told *The Guardian*. "Where does it say a book has to remain within a single genre? Why can't more than one genre occupy the space between the [covers]? Fantasy is the easiest genre to do badly. Perhaps it's the hardest genre to do well."

And with Mitchell, such associations go beyond a single book. Close readers of his (at that time) limited body of work would have noted *Cloud Atlas* as the origin of another of Mitchell's writerly tendencies. Two minor characters from *Ghostwritten* appear as protagonists in *Cloud Atlas*, the first time had done such a thing. Look at Mitchell's body



The storyline stretches from the past into the distant future.



Ursula K Le Guin is a favourite author of Mitchell's



Mitchell has also experimented with live-tweeting his fiction.



of work now, and the list of characters to have appeared in two or more of his novels is somewhere around two dozen. Then there are the cats that seem to appear in everything he writes, the invented brand of whisky that everyone seems to drink, and the same idiosyncratic types of people appearing over and over again. As much as Mitchell's books feel like singular works of endless variety, they all seem to be happening in the same fictional world.

When Mitchell was being swept away by Le Guin's *Earthsea* novels – or Tolkien's *The Hobbit* or *The Lord Of The Rings*, for that matter – it was only partly about the words and prose. It was the maps that were printed in each volume, all of them packed with names and places that had yet to be described by the author, their inhabitants and purpose a mystery. The first fiction the young Mitchell ever created was a map of his own invented land replete with towns and cities and races and species. As he fleshed out these details, stories seemed to naturally rise to the surface.

"My parents discovered they could shut me up for hours by mounting a large piece of cartridge paper on a drawing board and leave me to draw, and name, maps of imaginary archipelagos and continents," Mitchell said to the *The Paris Review*. "Those maps, I think, were my proto-novels."

Since the publication of *Cloud Atlas*, his novels have become windows onto a vast and growing map. According to an article in the *Guardian*, upon reading Mitchell's latest work his editor asked, "You're making your own Middle-Earth, aren't you?" That perceived kinship with Tolkien would have made most literary authors beat a rapid retreat, but Mitchell was invigorated by the comparison. Reading his interviews over time, it's possible to see him grapple with the concept, then grasp it, and then venerate it as a career-defining objective.

What a delicious prospect, and one so well suited to Mitchell's fascinations and preoccupations as an artist. What started as a desire to provide myriad characters a platform to be heard has become an "über-book" – the ultimate lens through which to study his own thoughts and feelings about people, the world they inhabit, and the time they blindly move through.

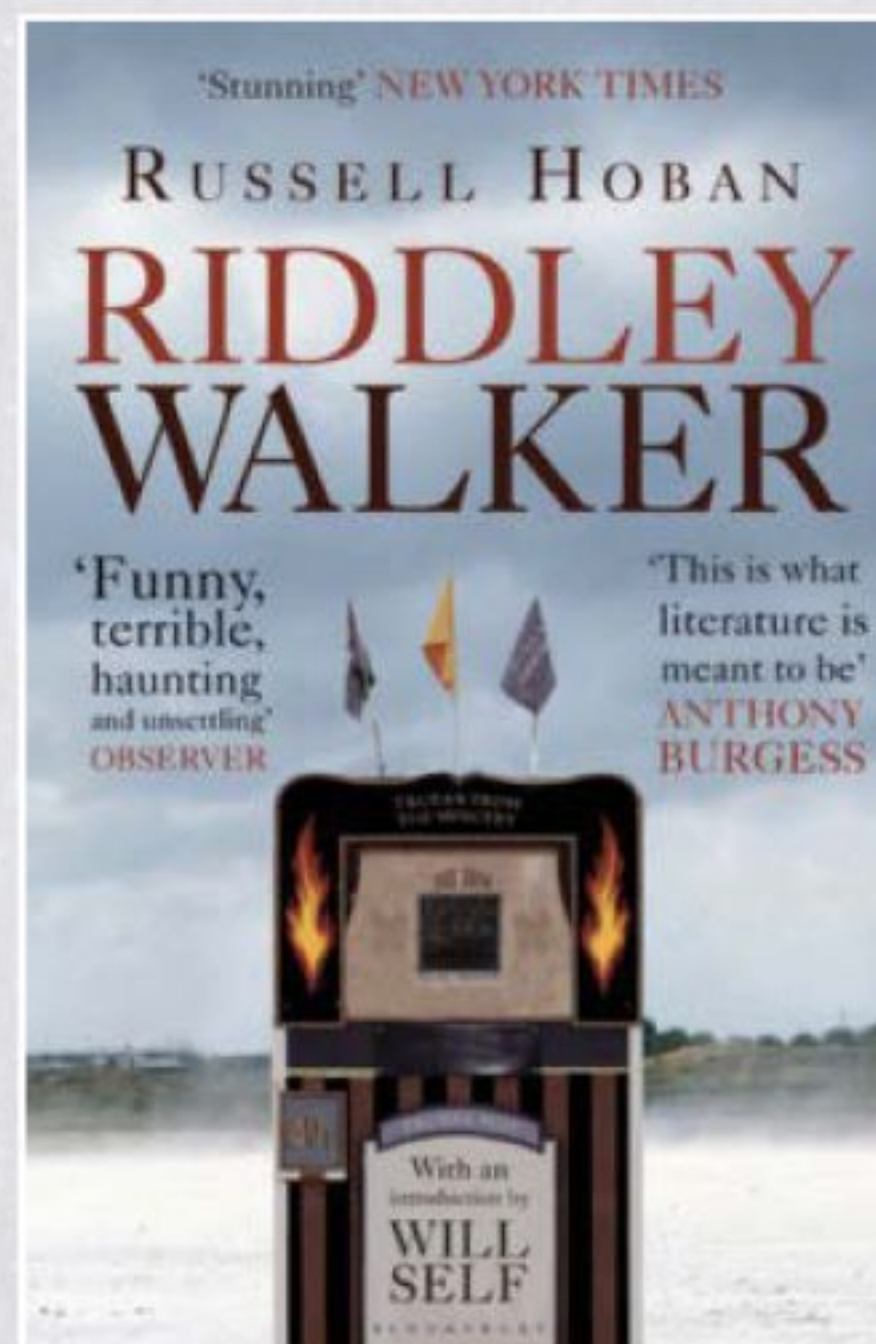
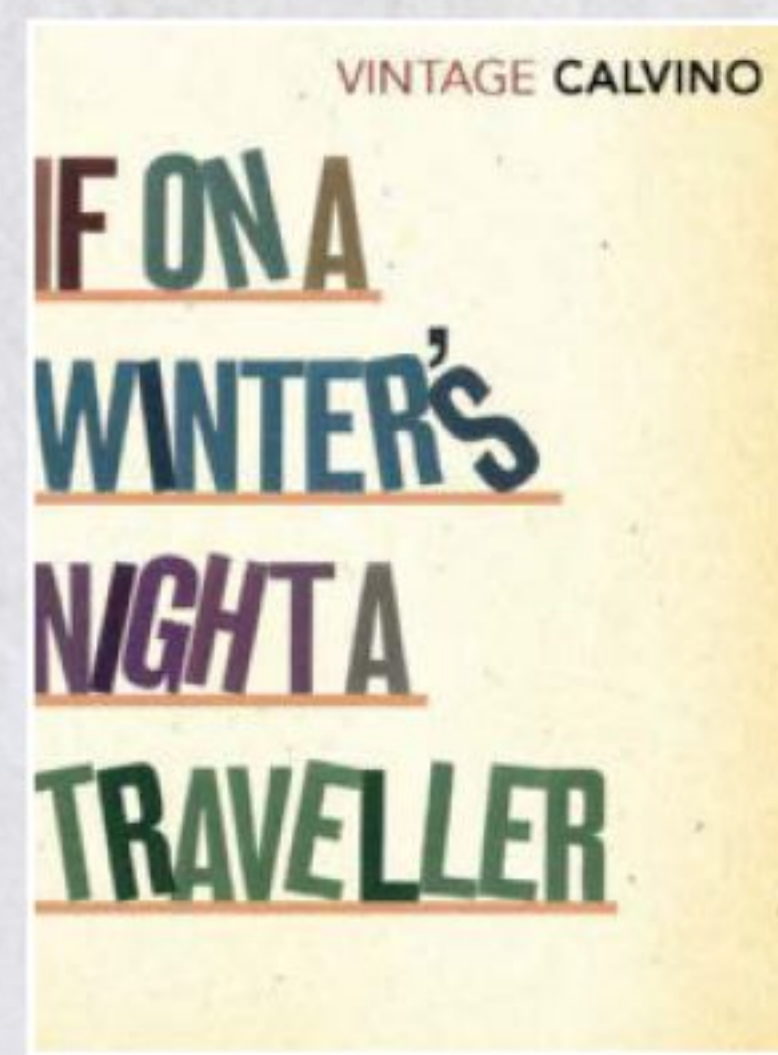
"I've come to realise that I'm bringing into being a fictional universe with its own cast, and that each of my books is one chapter in a sort of sprawling macro-novel," he told the *New York Times*. "That's my life's work, for however long my life lasts." 🐾

# Where Have I Seen This Before?

WHEN WORLDS COLLIDE

## IF ON A WINTER'S NIGHT A TRAVELLER ▶

This famous novel had a huge impact on Mitchell when he read it as a university in the late Eighties. Italo Calvino's use of interrupted narratives in a larger story lingered in his mind. Mitchell paid tribute the concept for *Cloud Atlas*, only he chose to resolve each of his stories in the novel's mirror-image second half.

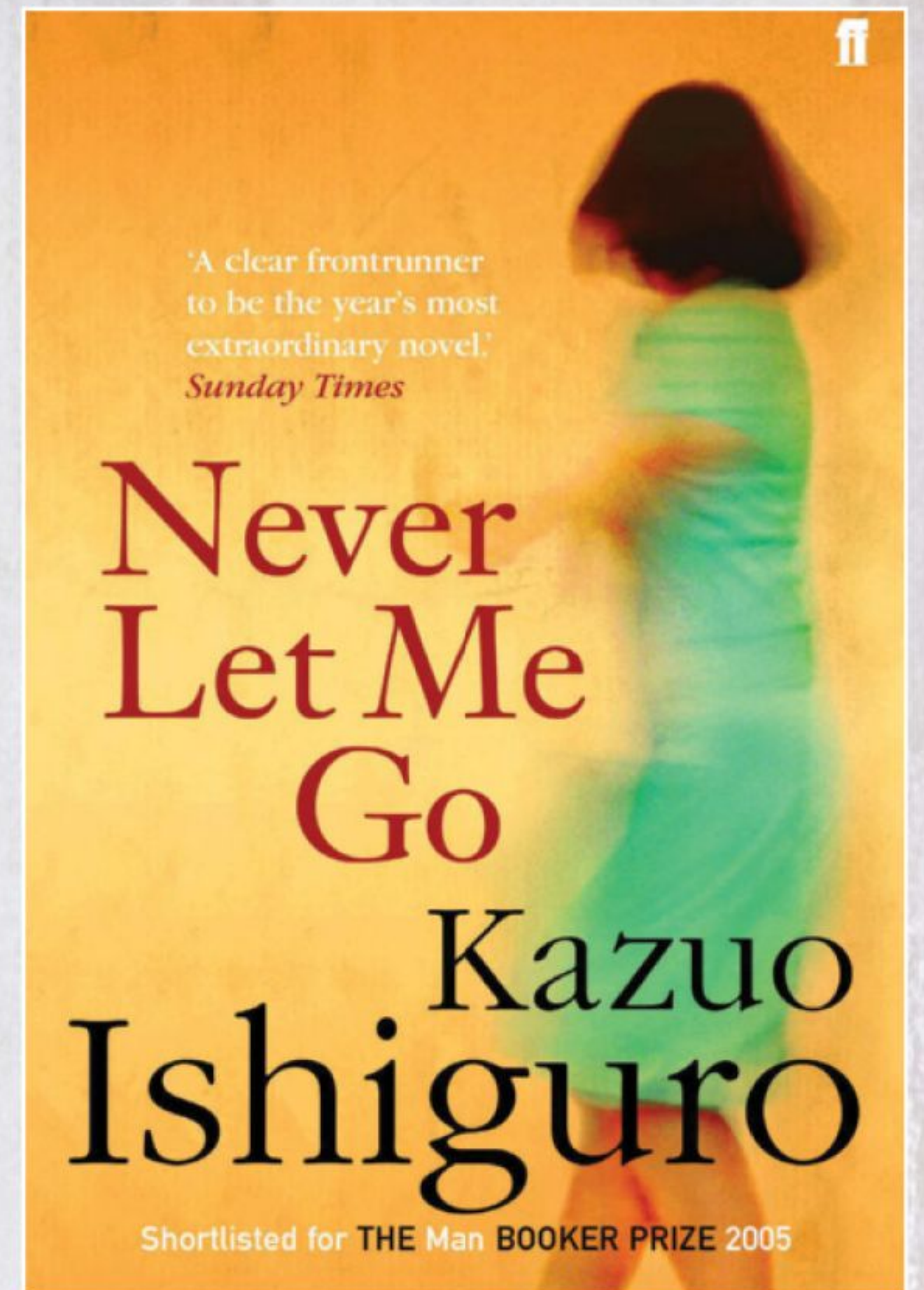
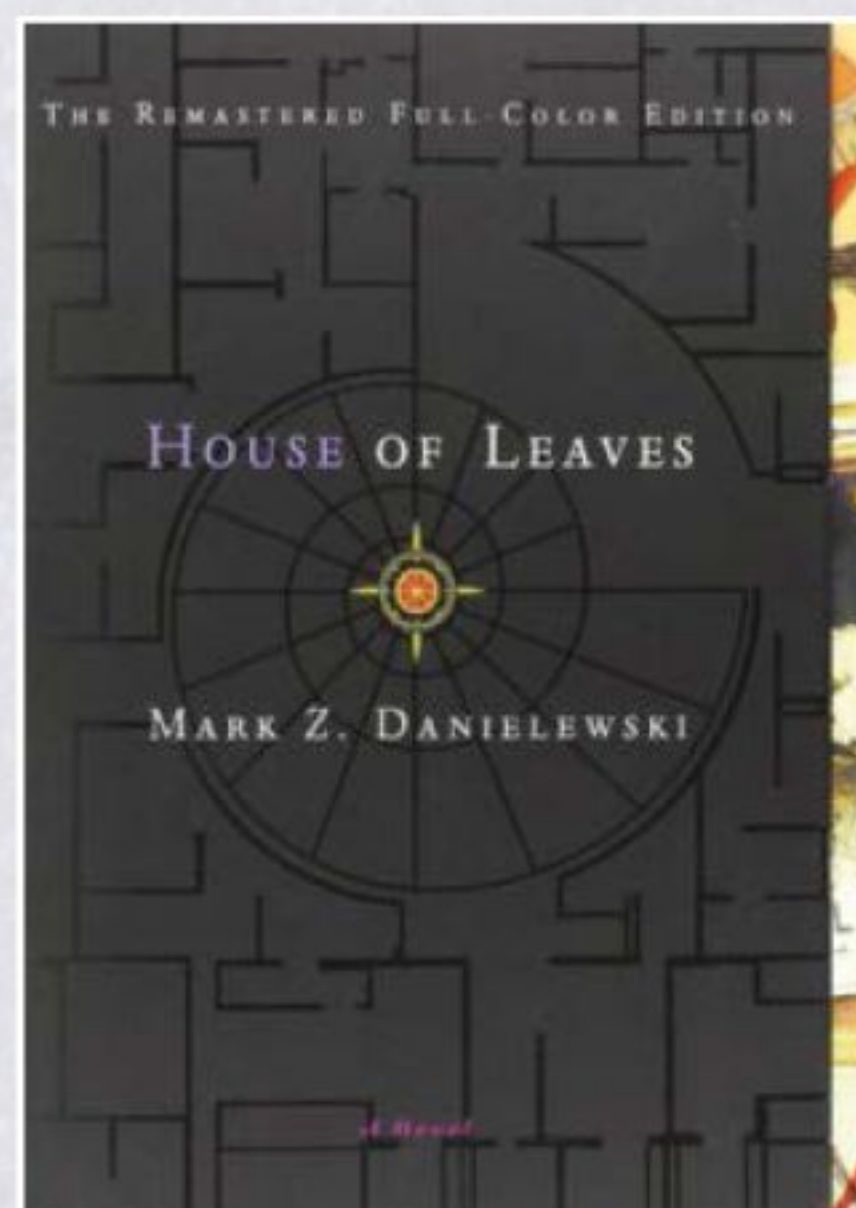


## ◀ RIDDLEY WALKER

The central story of *Cloud Atlas* is set far in the future, long after humanity's avarice and greed lead to the collapse of civilisation. It offers a glimpse at what might happen in the aftermath of such an event, suggesting that the same mistakes might easily be made again in the process. If you like that premise, you'll bloody love Russell Hoban's classic novel.

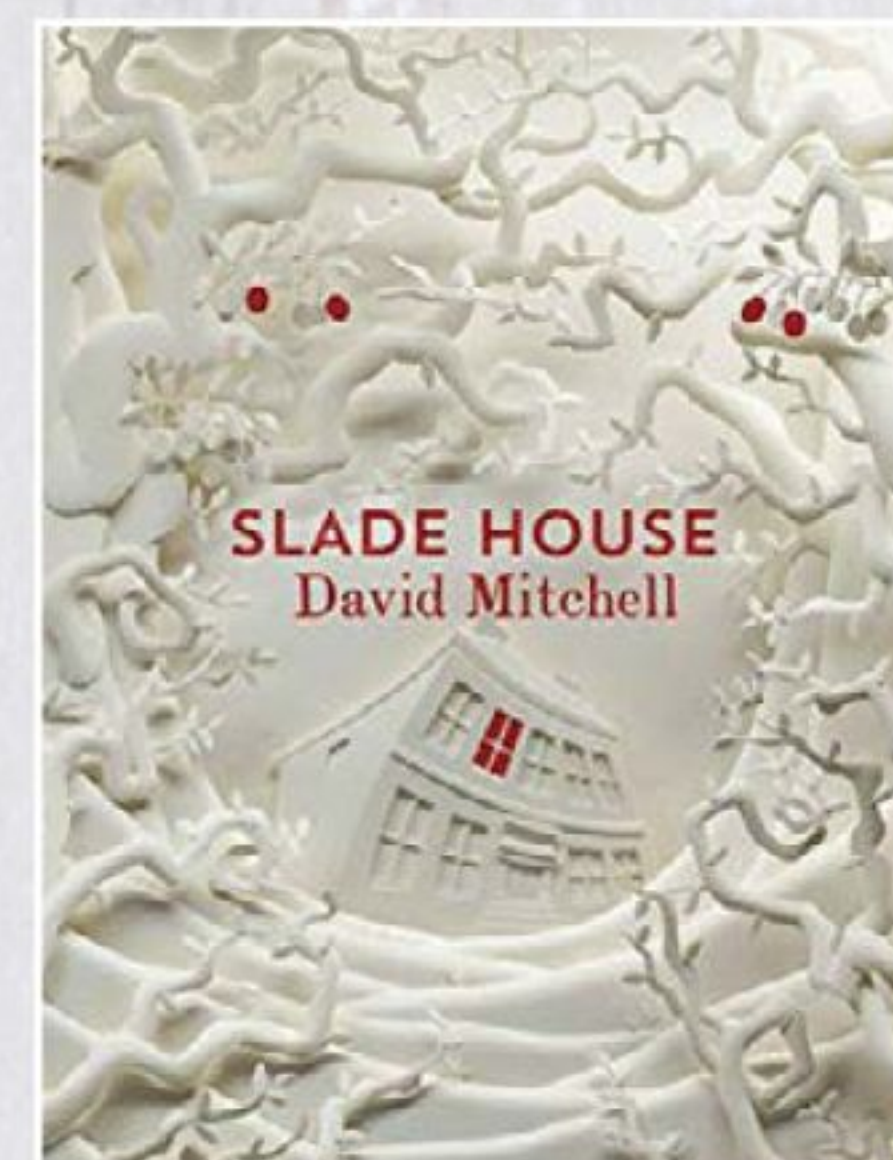
## ▶ HOUSE OF LEAVES

*Cloud Atlas* is notable as much for its sheer daring as much as anything else. That an author attempted something so inventive and genuinely made it work captivated critics and readers alike. Mark Danielewski's *House Of Leaves* managed the same trick of being both hugely popular and a genuine original – even more so than *Cloud Atlas*.



## ▶ NEVER LET ME GO

The story from *Cloud Atlas* that most closely resembles science fiction is the story of Sonmi-451, a clone in a futuristic dystopian Korean state. Mitchell's choice to embrace genre in this way startled many critics, but the Booker-winning Kazuo Ishiguro explored similar territory in *Never Let Me Go*, and he did it for an entire novel rather than just a few chapters.



## ◀ SLADE HOUSE

The germ of this novel started as an experiment in storytelling using Twitter's 140-character limitations. From there, Mitchell developed it into his distinctive take on the ghost story, bounding across decades and genres. If you liked what *Cloud Atlas* did with SF tropes then *Slade House* will reward horror fans in a similar way.

## ▶ CLOUD ATLAS

The film adaptation of *Cloud Atlas* was directed by the Wachowski Brothers and Tom Tykwer, and the (admittedly divisive) result is different enough to be considered a separate experience – even a primer. Mitchell has always been complimentary about the film, and presumably not just because it prompted a huge spike in book sales. It's set out differently to the novel, but worth a watch.







# A Beginner's Guide To Susan Hill

Meet Great Britain's master of the ghost story

WORDS JONATHAN HATFULL

**F**ew living authors can make as convincing a case for mastery of the ghost story like Susan Hill. The author of *The Woman In Black* has seen her creation terrify audiences on the page, the stage and the screen, with the film version of her tale almost single-handedly driving Hammer Horror's revival.

Although she is far from being simply a horror author, her work in the genre has been vital and absolutely thrilling.

Born in Scarborough in 1942, Hill's family moved to Coventry in 1958 and she showed an aptitude for writing at an early age. By the time she went to study English at King's College London, she had already written her first novel (*The Enclosure*, at the age of 15) and it was published during her first year of study.

Hill has frequently moved between genres, delivering thoughtful studies of relationships, compelling crime novels (the ongoing *Simon Serailler* series) and absolutely terrifying ghost stories.

Hill has a reputation for speaking frankly on subjects as varied as the Conservative government (which

she criticises, despite affirming as a Conservative), the fact that authors can tend to get a little bit precious about their process, and the idea that some people are simply born evil. "It's a knotty problem, but I think there are some people, not many, who have ... the devil in them," she told the *Guardian* in 2013.

When it comes to writing a ghost story, Hill had this to say when discussing the film adaptation of *The Woman In Black*. "If you were writing a short ghost story, I would say: start very quietly and go: one, two, three jump. Or start with a jump and make it jumpier. But with a long story it must have rises and falls." She has certainly given us more than our fair share of jumps.

Although it's arguable that none of Hill's ghost stories have reached the heights of *The Woman In Black*, her grasp of the genre has given us some wonderfully chilling tales to keep us up late into the night. What's more, even though her creation has been adapted for stage and screen (and a disappointing film sequel), it's a novel that still gives us nightmares.



*The Woman In Black* has been adapted into numerous forms.

Which author  
would you like to  
see tackled next?

Let us know on Twitter  
or Facebook





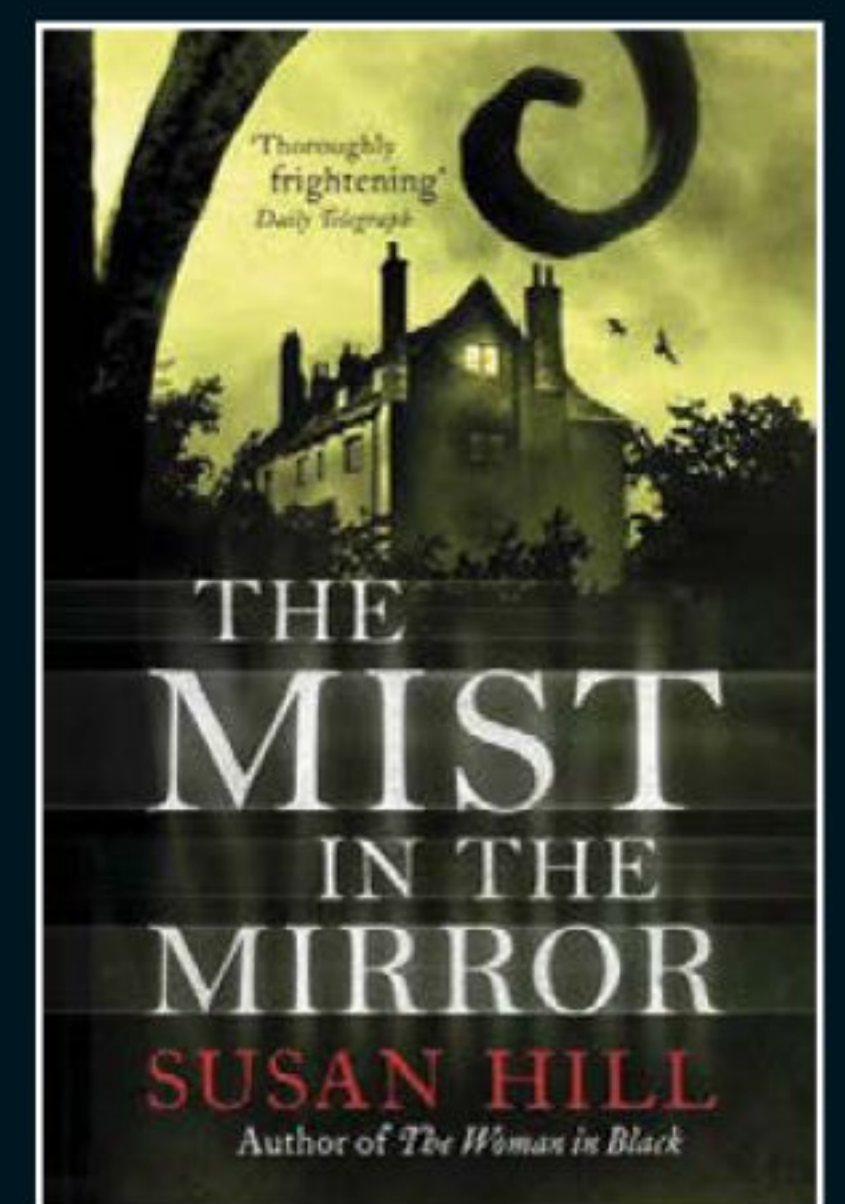
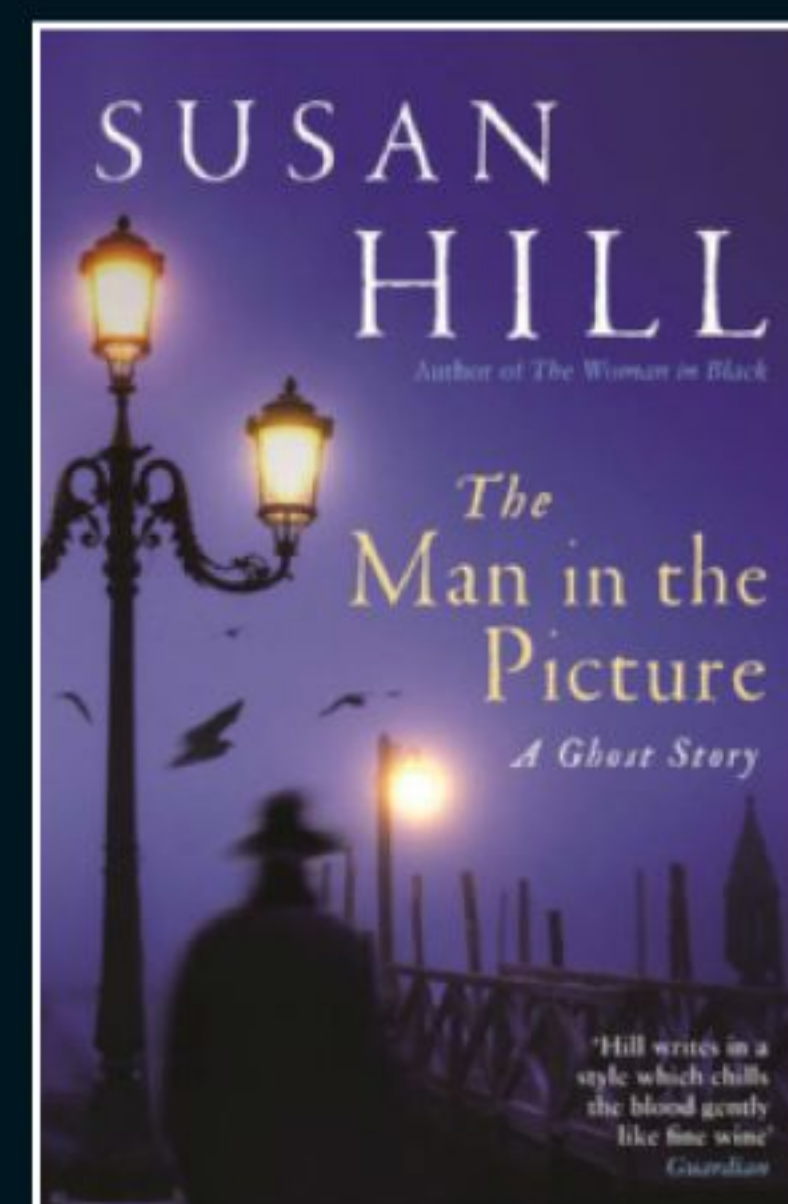
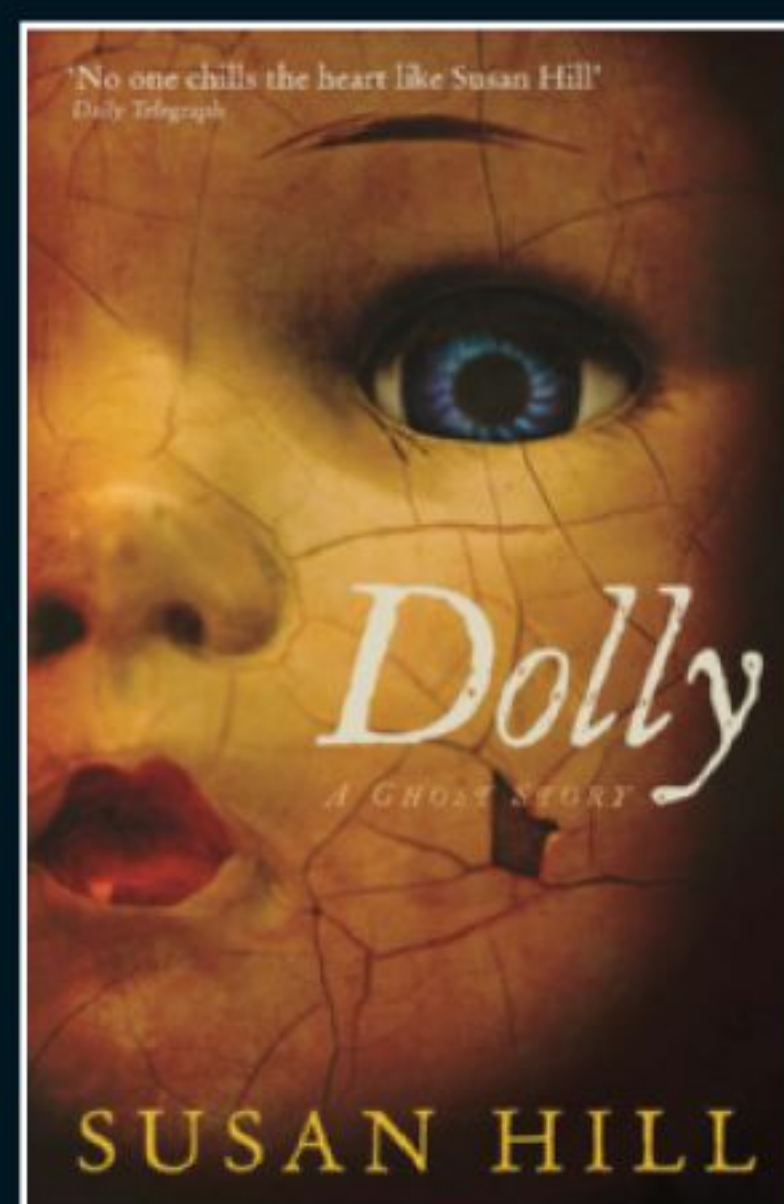
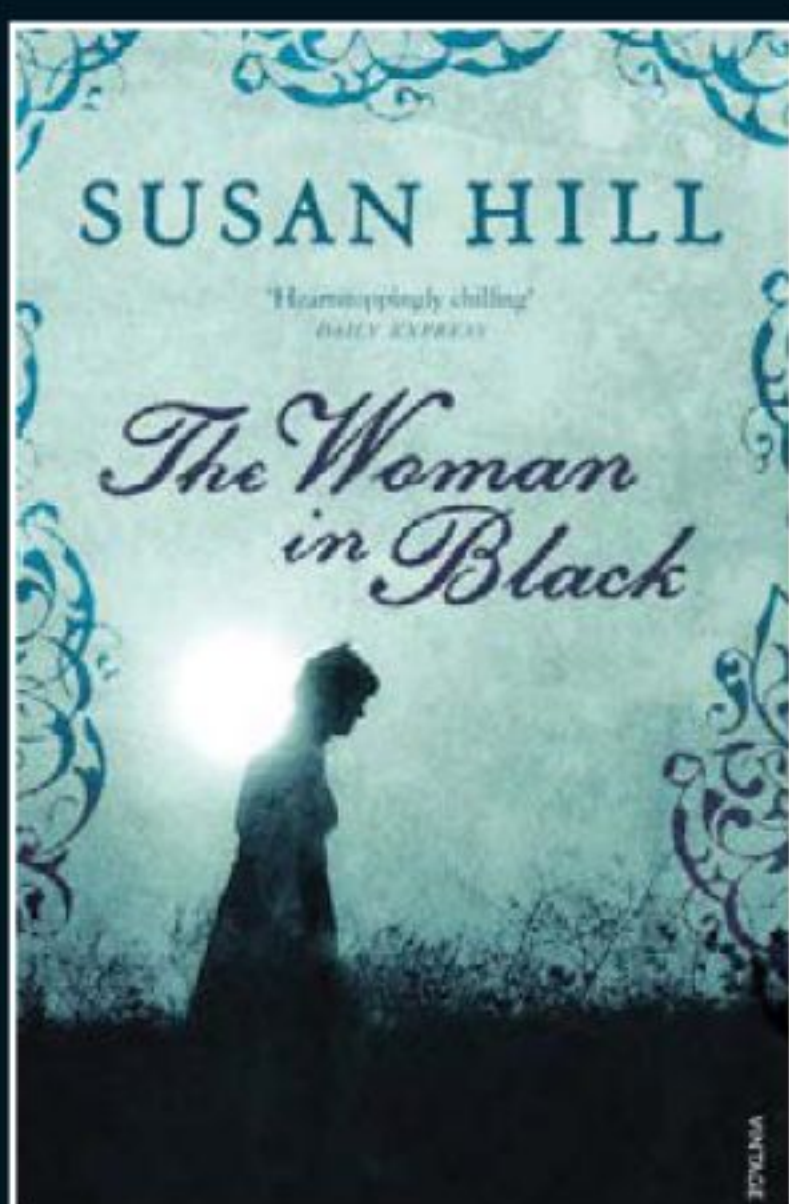


Daniel Radcliffe as Arthur Kipps in Hammer's live-action feature film.



Hill studied English at King's College, London.

© C.G.P. Grey



## Most haunted

Neverending vengeance from beyond the grave

### THE WOMAN IN BLACK

Publisher: Vintage  
Published: 1983  
Price: £7.99

*The Woman in Black* is still Hill's best-loved work, and a beautifully told Victorian ghost story with a hugely atmospheric

setting and an unforgettable spectre. Solicitor Arthur Kipps is sent to Eel Marsh House to sort out the affairs of the reclusive Alice Drablow. He soon realises that all is not well and that reports of a horrible curse on the locals' children may not be the work of paranoid minds. There's no doubting the success of the adaptations, but this atmospheric novel is the place to start.



"Best ghost story ever written. #BookClub"

@Churchy99

## Childhood memories

An old house has many secrets

### THE SMALL HAND

Publisher: Profile Books  
Published: 2010  
Price: £5.99

Hill finds yet more chills in old houses in *The Small Hand*, which starts with a skin-crawling

moment, as antiquarian Adam Snow is investigating an abandoned house before feeling a chill, as a small hand slides into his own. Turning around, Snow discovers that no one is there, but when he returns home he realises that the presence has followed him. Snow decides to dig deeper into the mystery, only to find out that the truth behind this unquiet spirit is horrifying indeed, and ultimately tragic.



"Read *The Small Hand* by Susan Hill, loved the read, she always seems to capture the old traditional ghost story style. #BookClub" @Stephen\_Chorley

## Doll's house

Strange how dolls look like their owners...

### DOLLY

Publisher: Profile Books  
Published: 2012  
Price: £7.99

The idea of transferred evil comes to play in Hill's deeply unnerving ghost story. Edward remembers

the summer he and his cousin, Leonora, spent with their aunt, Kestrel, who lived in the Fens at lyot House with a sharp-tongued housekeeper. Edward is a mild-mannered orphan who wouldn't hurt a fly, but the devil's in spoilt young Leonora, whose behaviour is unpredictable and selfish. When Kestrel decides to make her the gift of a china doll, Leonora lashes out, and a horrifying sequence of events is put into motion.



"I've just finished reading 'Dolly: A Ghost Story' by Susan Hill. A bit predictable, but enjoyable anyway #BookClub" @john\_metcalf

## Masks off

The painting stares back at you

### THE MAN IN THE PICTURE

Publisher: Profile Books  
Published: 2007  
Price: £7.99

Hill channels MR James for this creepy tale of a painting with a haunted past. The narrator remembers talking to his

university tutor at Cambridge, and the man obsessing over a Venetian painting depicting a festival. The masked figures are revelling, but there seems to be an unnoticed man in the corner who is in an obvious state of distress. We learn about the chain of possession of the piece, and the effect it has on those who own it, as well as those who want to find out the truth about the man.



"Just finished *The Man In The Picture* by Susan Hill in one sitting. Spooky as all hell. Infernal brilliance! #BookClub" @Jeremy\_Lambert

## A life and death

Just goes to show; never meet your heroes

### THE MIST IN THE MIRROR

Publisher: Vintage  
Published: 1999  
Price: £7.99

*The Mist In The Mirror* takes a classic old ghost story approach, as protagonist Sir James Monmouth spins his strange tale

to a younger man on a cold, dark night. Monmouth had come back to London after spending a long time abroad with the intention of researching explorer Conrad Vane. His life is somehow intertwined with Vane's, but his efforts to find out about his own past come to nothing, and he starts being followed by a spectral crying child. It's a divisive tale, but one fans should take a chance on.



"Really enjoyed *The Mist In The Mirror*. Her use of language really does transport you back to Victorian London! #BookClub" @CDL\_Watts



## Your Five Top Books Of 2015

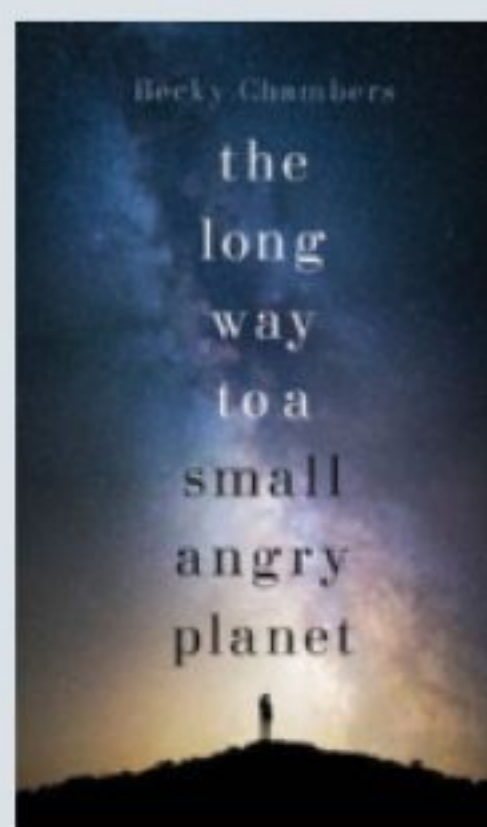
CHOOSE YOUR TOP FIVE  
@SCIFINOW ON TWITTER



### 1. The Scarlet Gospels

"Because it was the return of genre master Clive Barker to horror after so many years. #BookClub"

@ParsonsFiction



### 2. A Long Way To A Small Angry Planet

"I am still talking and recommending it to everyone. #BookClub"

@Cascararogue



### 3. The Shepherd's Crown

"A fine send-off from Sir Terry and the Discworld. #BookClub"

@Rhys180



### 4. Uprooted

"A classic fairy tale feel, but with lots of twists and turns. Excellent read. #BookClub"

@PasmineJalmer



### 5. Star Wars: Aftermath

"Fantastic start to post-Jedi new book canon without erasing the good stuff from old EU. #BookClub"

@RobThez

Details Author: Tricia Sullivan Publisher: Gollancz Price: £16.99 Released: 21 January

# OCCUPY ME

Spread your wings

It can be quite exhilarating to realise that you don't have much of an idea what's going on, provided that you're in the hands of a good writer. With her ambitious and frequently thrilling *Occupy Me*, Tricia Sullivan shows that she's definitely capable of sending the reader on a dizzying and inventive journey.

Pearl is an angel, wings and all. When we first meet her she's working as a flight attendant, just as she encounters Dr Sorle, a man on the run with a briefcase that means a lot to both of them. To Pearl, it's got part of her stolen self locked inside it. To Dr Sorle, it's somehow got the body of his incredibly wealthy and decidedly non-humanitarian employer inside.

After the pair exit the plane mid-air, Pearl begins the hunt for the man, the briefcase and the truth behind her identity. Because while she may have wings, she may not be heaven-sent.

The central plot at the heart of *Occupy Me* is essentially a manhunt. Of course, describing the plot like that leaves out the mutant frogs, the dinosaurs, the flaming pterosaur that comes flying out of the briefcase when it's opened, the international conspiracy and the time-bending rules and consequences.

Yes, there is a lot packed into a slim 272 pages, and Sullivan shows both a giddy enthusiasm for the possibilities that her ideas offer and a confidence that the reader will be

able to keep up. Hopping around between time periods and locations, this is a book that demands your concentration, and rewards you with a story that's thrilling, moving and often quite funny. We're huge fans of Scottish veterinarian Alison, who responds to being faced with the impossible with a wholly relatable combination of grim determination and a fair amount of whiskey.

Pearl herself is a great creation, someone whose instinctive need to help people puts her at risk and often prevents her from really getting to know them. Some of the most affecting scenes in the novel are those in which she tries to make the best of a bad situation, whether it's helping neglected dogs or helping to soothe the nerves of nervous flyers with a little subconscious suggestion. Her identity as an angel is one of the novel's most important plot points, but Sullivan gives her a real physicality too. She's not just a bleeding heart with a pair of wings; she's desperate for human contact, and those wings are absolutely fantastic.

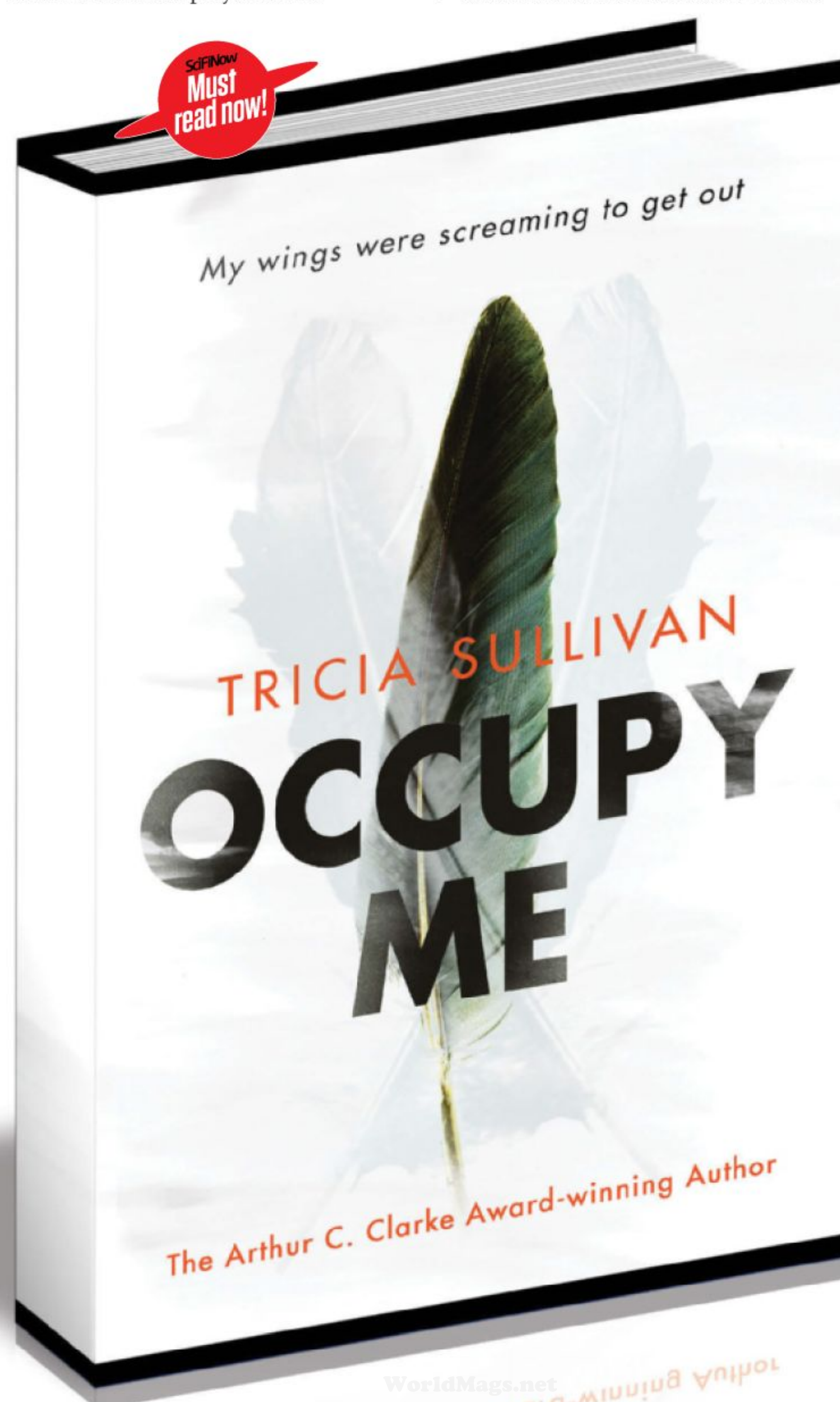
Her warm personality and Alison's stern good sense are just two of the ways that Sullivan anchors the swirling fantastical elements of her story. Dr Sorle's back story provides her with the opportunity to add a tragic human element, and there's an undercurrent of sinister capitalist intrigue throughout that we don't want to spoil here. But it's also a novel that jumps from a pub in Edinburgh to a primordial landscape where the building blocks of life can be found inside trees – provided you don't get eaten by a roving dinosaur first.

It's a fiercely creative piece of sci-fi that grabs you by the wrist and takes you running along with it. There are bumps along the way and moments where you wish it would slow down, but it's hard to complain when the experience is this compelling.

Jonathan Hatfull

SciFiNow scored **8** for *Occupy Me*  
Follow our scores on [JUST A SCORE](#)

**IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...**  
**The House Of Shattered Wings**  
**Aliette De Bodard**  
Fallen angels clash in a ruined Paris in this stunning urban fantasy.







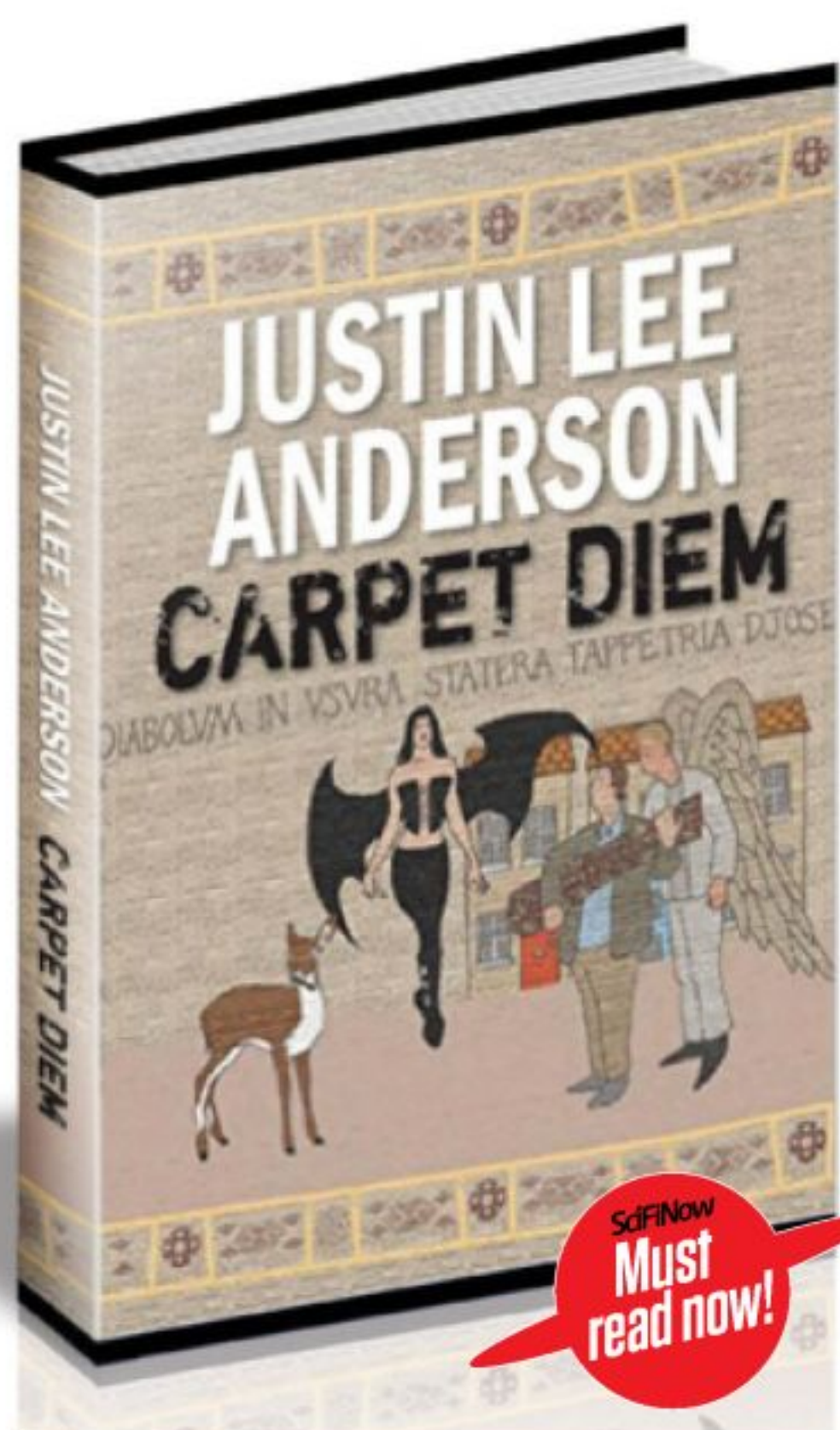
**Details** Author: Justin Lee Anderson Publisher: Wild Wolf Publishing Price: £9.99 Released: Out now

# CARPET DIEM

Seize the rug!

When slightly eccentric old relatives leave bizarre object d'art in their wills, often car-boot sales are an attractive option for the bewildered and usually ungrateful recipients.

Fortunately, or perhaps unfortunately for Simon Debovar, he rather liked the artefacts that Uncle



Marvin had left behind after he and most of the Debovar family met their maker at the hands of an explosive flambé dessert.

Simon discovers that the very busy and colourful carpet that adorns his living room is of great value, not to the producers of the *Antiques Roadshow* or even *Flog It*, but the devil.

Simon's carpet is the ultimate prize in a bet between God and Satan, and they have dispatched their angels and demons to retrieve it. Before he can decide which party is more deserving, the carpet is stolen and the rules state he must find it and declare a winner. Being somewhat of a hermit, this causes great distress to Simon as his solitary life gets turned upside down and his set bathing regime is completely ruined.

There are so many delightful surprises showcased within these addictive and extremely witty pages. Anderson has a flare for rather classic characterisation from Simon's introvert insecurity to the potty-mouthed loudness of his alcohol-swilling Great Aunt Harriet

(one of only three survivors of the Debovar dessert massacre), a double act that should go down in literary history.

There is something very Arthur Dent (though sadly sans his dressing gown and towel) about Simon. This very ordinary and unassuming man must do all he can to make the right choices for the good of the universe, but can he really be bothered?

Thankfully, there are a gaggle of otherworldly bods who are happy to interfere and keep him motivated, even if they do have their own personal agendas. No motivation is required to gobble up this book though, which is perfectly balanced in every way.

**Claire Nicholls**



SciFiNow scored 9 for Carpet Diem

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**IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...**

**There Goes The Galaxy**

**Jenn Thorson**

Bertram Ludlow learns that he is the only one who can save Earth from an alien makeover. Thank goodness he's got a stun gun!

## YOUR READS

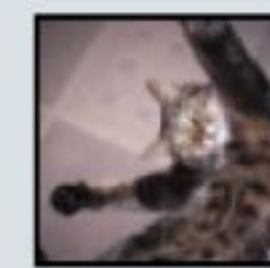
What you lot have been reading this month



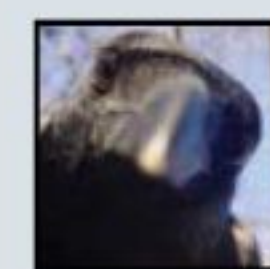
"My annual re-read of *A Christmas Carol*. Box of delights next. #BookClub" @mamacrow



"I'm reading *Red Rising* by Pierce Brown, it's good but not quite what I was expecting. #BookClub" @whiskeyrich



"*Ecko Endgame* by Danie Ware. Absolutely fantastic conclusion to the series. No idea how it's going to end!! :) #BookClub" @Pussinabox



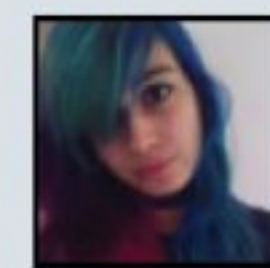
"Mixing *Gulliver's Travels* with *Darwin's Voyage Of The Beagle*. Not sure which I'm enjoying more - both? #BookClub" @TheCrowLady



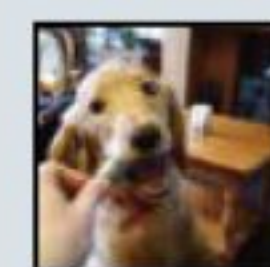
"Reading *The Invisible Library* by Genevieve Cogman great story so far... #BookClub" @philbooty



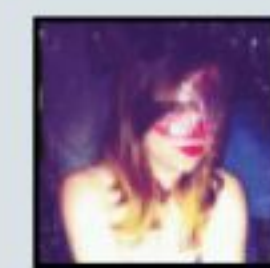
"*The Twelve* by Justin Cronin. Loving it. #BookClub" @HenriksSombrero



"*The Shining Girls* by Lauren Beukes! Its unexpected sci-fi twist hooked me. A time travel serial killer thriller. Can't go wrong! #BookClub" @Steppenfreak



"I've started on the web novel *Worm* by John McCrae a.k.a. Wildbow. Very good thus far. #BookClub" @Rhys180



"*Hex* by @Thomas\_Novelist, really creeping me out, but also really enjoyable as you learn about a town's dark secret. #BookClub" @Cascararogue



"*Matilda* by Roald Dahl, it's marvelous!! #BookClub" @RockingRhys



I'm reading *Master And Margarita*. Satan visits Stalin's Russia. #BookClub" @AutHorsDoeu

Tell us what you're reading on Twitter or Facebook

Author: Susan Dennard Publisher: Tor UK Price: £12.99 Released: 14 January

# TRUTHWITCH

The truth really does hurt

Susan Dennard is well travelled. Having visited six out of the seven continents as a marine biologist, it is perhaps this sophistication that lends her world-building such fine polish. From the Midenzi settlement to the waters of the Jadansi Sea, *Truthwitch* is coloured with effortless portrayals of the locales of a continent at war and on the edge of an even bigger conflict.

At the heart of it are two young witches: Safiya, a Truthwitch who can tell truth from lies, and Iseult, a Threadwitch who can see the threads that bind those around her. It's clear that this is a real passion project for Dennard, whose characters and narrative are woven intricately in continual action. However, there are parts where some of the themes and sentences get a bit repetitive across two or three paragraphs, and where Dennard's lexicon

breaks up the flow of the narrative. But it's easy to be hooked in despite these shortcomings, as Safiya and Iseult find themselves in trouble often.

It's all because their magic is sought after by the various armies, witches and royals who will stop at nothing to capture them and use their unique abilities. But that's just it: no matter how much their power is reinforced, it never really manages to convince. Even Dennard at times seem sceptical of her two main characters, at times down-playing their skills and other instances just flat-out acknowledging that their magic hasn't worked. Frankly, it's illogical and disappointing.

If your novel is named *Truthwitch* then you assume that the only Truthwitch around is omnipotent, and yet she is lied to time and time again without seemingly any immediate repercussion. It makes you wonder what the point is.

**Carrie Mok**



SciFiNow scored 5 for Truthwitch

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**IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...**

**Shadow And Bone**

**Leigh Bardugo**

This fantasy tale focuses on the hidden power of Alina Starkov, the key to the end of a war.





60 SECONDS WITH

## Victoria Aveyard



Where do we find Mare Barrow when we catch up with her in *Glass Sword*, and how have the events of *Red Queen* affected her? Right where we

left her. The book picks up exactly where *Red Queen* left off. She's attempting to escape, while simultaneously trying to pick up the pieces of what she has done. Every story, from the micro to the macro level, is about escalation. So I essentially had to outdo myself in *Glass Sword*, while at the same time still staying true to the story and characters.

### What has it been like to see the incredible reaction to Mare and her story?

It's astounding. I never thought that *Red Queen* would get me an agent, let alone have this massive impact. I'm still kind of baffled by how many people have latched onto her and her story.

### What would you say that the biggest misconception about writing YA fiction is?

I guess the 'everyone writes YA to cash in' thing is quite insulting, not to mention false. And of course, the idea that YA is somehow 'lesser' than other fiction. It's just a category. Are your main character and most of the supporting cast in this age bracket? Yes? Congratulations, you wrote YA. I hate when people don't label *Harry Potter* as YA because it's "better than that." Nope. Harry's 15-17. YA. Thanks for playing.

### Universal has the rights to a feature-film adaptation. If you could have one wish granted for the movie, what would it be?

So far the wishes are coming true. Currently, the best one is having such an even balance of women working on the film. Hollywood absolutely has an issue with gender equality. It's a boys club in a lot of ways. But having a female director, screenwriter and producers – it has been fantastic. I think my ultimate wish is for the movie to be made.

I'm not going to believe it's real until I see it on a screen on the opening night.

*Glass Sword* will be available from 11 February via Orion Publishing.



Author: Charlie Jane Anders Publisher: Titan Price: £7.99 Released: 26 January

## ALL THE BIRDS IN THE SKY

### Save the green planet

The worlds of magic and science collide in Charlie Jane Anders' debut novel, a sensitive, funny and beautifully drawn study of a friendship in the face of our world's imminent end.

It's the story of Patricia and Laurence, who find each other while trying to survive as school outsiders. Patricia discovers that she's different when she suddenly finds that she's able to talk to birds. Laurence is a budding science genius who creates a time machine that lets him jump two seconds into the future. Their friendship hits the speed bumps of Laurence's fear of her magic powers, high-school peer pressure and an assassin posing as their guidance counsellor, but they have a tremendous impact on each other.

When they reconnect years later, she's a talented witch and he's part of a team working on a way to get mankind off our dying Earth. Can their rekindled friendship

survive the planet-threatening hardships to come?

The first and perhaps most important point to make is that Anders has created an utterly convincing and affecting central friendship, with all its highs and lows, flaws and triumphs. Similarly, the world around them is both fantastical enough to beguile while staying rooted in a recognisable reality.

Once Anders takes us (seamlessly) into their early adulthood, their connection is just as strong, but the world around them is changing at a terrifying rate. Patricia's witch superiors discuss a radical final solution to save the planet, and Laurence's boss has an invention that may well tear Earth in two.

The environmental and political themes are strong in *All The Birds In The Sky*, and Anders shows incredible skill and confidence in weaving them into the core relationship. It's never cloying or preachy, while remaining moving,



SciFiNow  
Must read now!

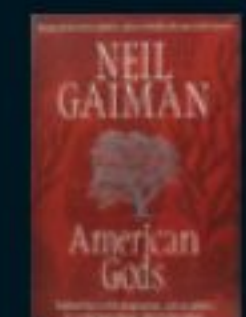
witty and worryingly relevant. This is a wonderful read, and we cannot wait to see what Anders does next.

Jonathan Hatfull



SciFiNow scored 9 for  
All the Birds in the Sky

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### IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...

American Gods  
Neil Gaiman

The changing world is the stage for an epic conflict in Gaiman's modern classic.

Details Author: Markus Heitz Publisher: Quercus Price: £8.99 Released: Out now

## ONEIROS

A book to keep you awake at night

You can't escape death forever.

That's the subtext of pretty much every supernatural horror story, from *Dracula* to *Final Destination*. You might trick the grim reaper for a while, but in the end he's going to win.

It's a theme that's as often meant to be comforting as it is scary, and

Markus Heitz's *Oneiros* is yet another example of how that works. His hero, Konstantin Korff, is well acquainted with death: he's an undertaker by trade, talented at making the dead look alive again.

But he's also a Death Sleeper, a kind of immortal who attracts the reaper whenever he falls asleep. He's immune to death, but the people around him aren't. And while Korff sees his abilities as a curse, there are others who see them as an asset, and they've found a way to weaponise Death Sleepers.

At 622 pages, *Oneiros* is a fairly lengthy novel, and it's only partly justified. Though Korff is the main character, Heitz also tells the story of several other Death Sleepers, some of who are more interesting than others (the insomniac baroness? Great. The chain-smoking paparazzo? Sort of dull). Minor characters, too, tend to get a lot of attention before being forgotten about, shoved off into the

margins to get on with their own irrelevant storylines away from the action. Even Korff's supposedly prestigious business gets mostly ignored after the first few chapters – which is a shame, because it's (morbidly) fascinating.

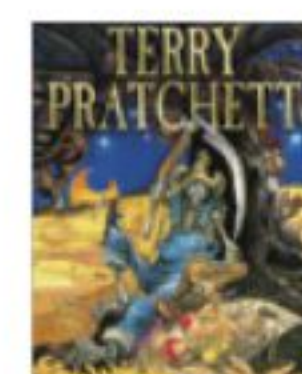
The clogged-up pacing is especially frustrating, because the mythology is clever, and the way traditional folk legends are woven in is inspired. But the clock's ticking for all of us, so whether you're willing to read maybe 100 pages of nonsense in among the good stuff is up to you. Once you're through it, though it's worth the ride.

Sarah Dobbs



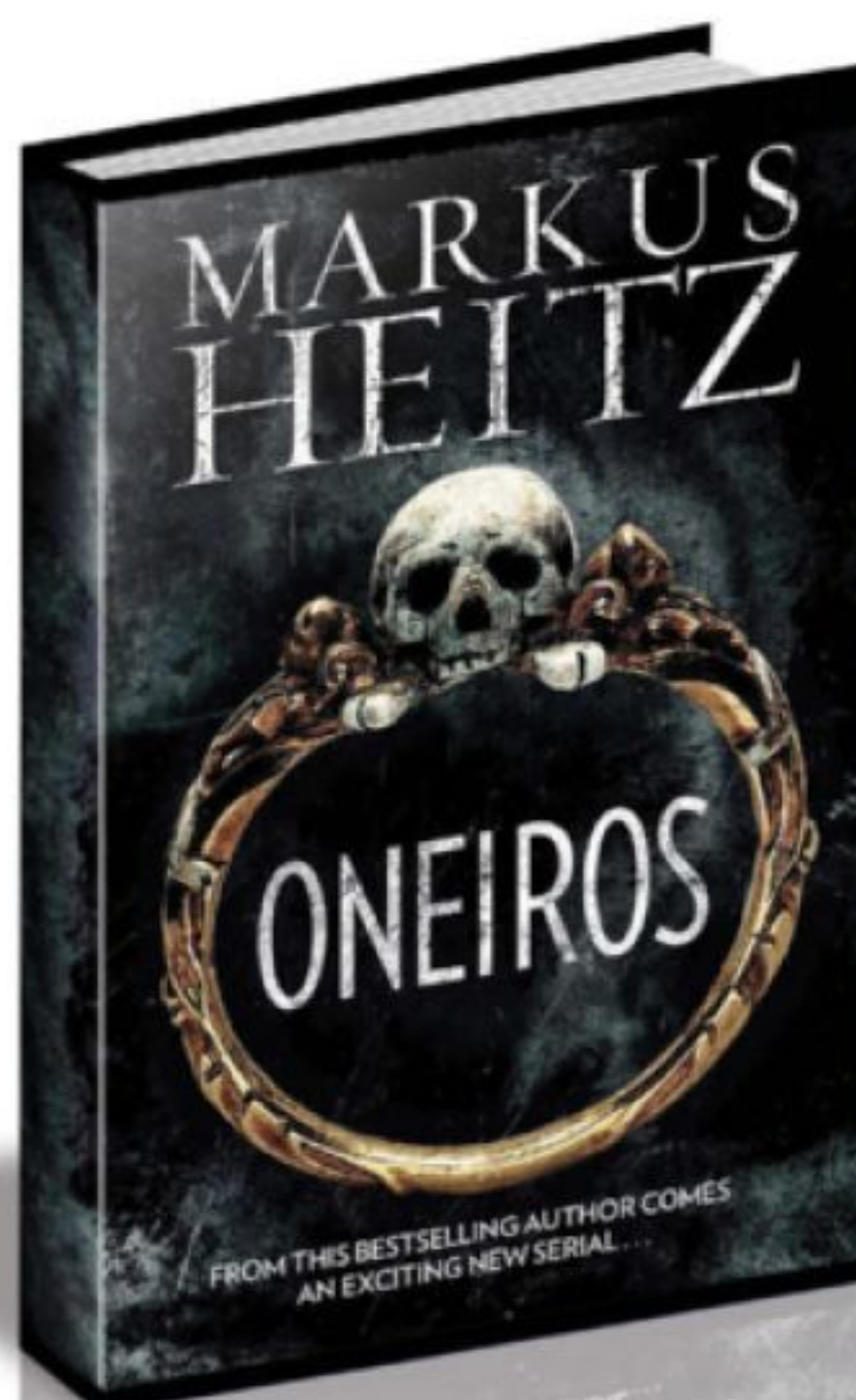
SciFiNow scored 7 for  
Oneiros

Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE



Reaper Man  
Terry Pratchett

A sillier take on Death, Pratchett's story still shows how vital it is that life eventually ends.

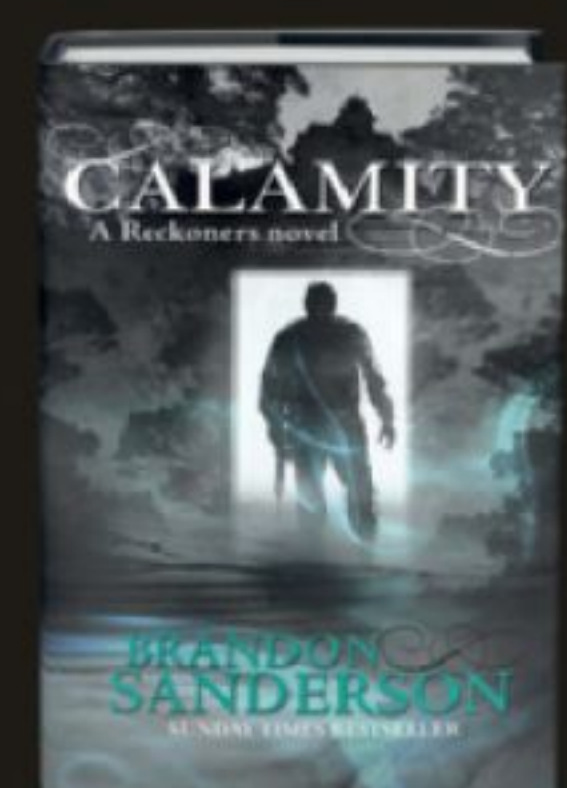




# VENGEANCE IS COMING



The second book in the stunning  
*Reckoners* series from the  
*Sunday Times* bestselling author



Coming February 2016

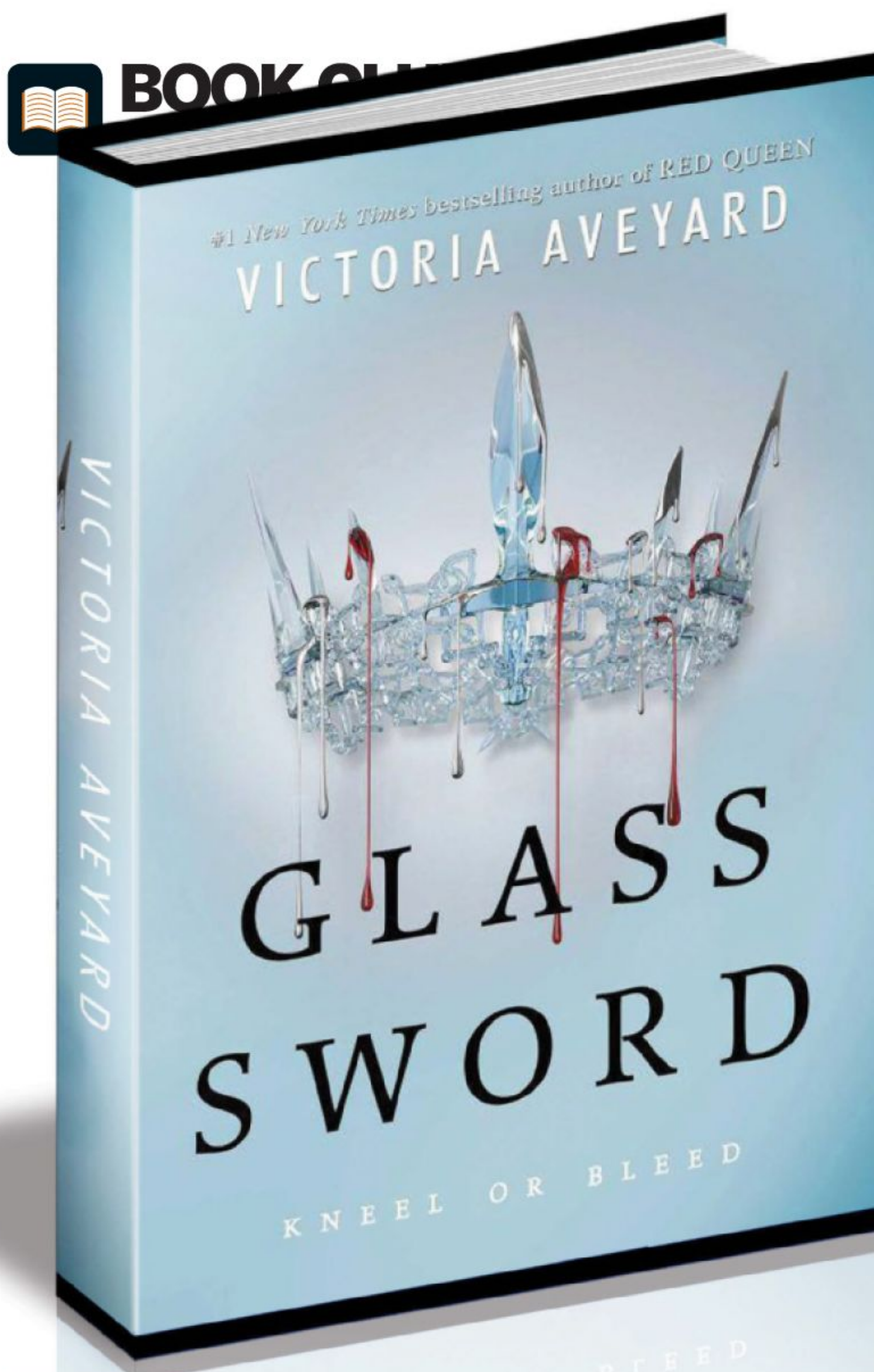
OUT NOW

WorldMags.net

www.gollancz.co.uk







Author: Victoria Aveyard Publisher: Orion Price: £7.99 Released: 11 February

## GLASS SWORD Trust no one

**The difficult thing** with a series of novels is that a cliffhanger at the end of the early books can be a bit old hat. It stands to reason that whatever perilous situation the central character faces will be escapable, otherwise book numbers two and three would be very disappointing. Obviously, this is not exhaustive, as we have learned from Ned Stark.

What often entices the reader back for more is the need for answers and expansion. The first book in Victoria Aveyard's *Red Queen* trilogy offered cliffhangers of vengeance, which aside from anything else sounds like a great name for a thrash-metal band.

We have already been through so much with Mare, the ordinary girl from the slums who finds herself with the superpowers of the silver-blooded nobility. *Glass Sword* catches up with her a few hours after the treacherous events of *Red Queen*, an outlaw and top of Norta's most-wanted list.

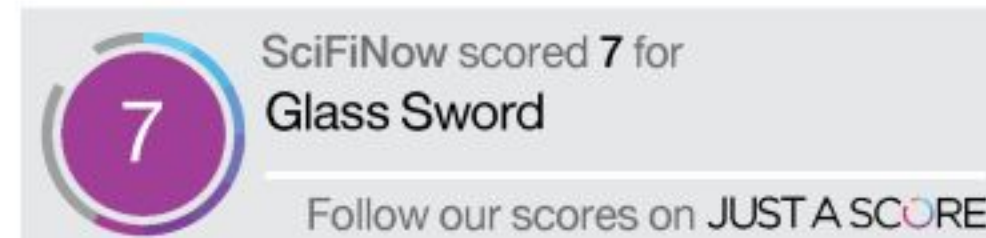
The poor girl must be cream crackered after all the fighting and flinging of her special electrical powers,

but like a trooper she presses on. Mare learns through the Scarlet Guard rebellion that she is not the only blood mutation, and decides to set up her own *Twilight*-esque army of newbloods. She just has to find them before the new Silver King (who is also incidentally, her ex-boyfriend) does, and he is mightily put out that she has a) escaped alive, and b) has done so with his brother.

It is high-adrenaline stuff, and the action is exciting in a merry-go-round kind of way, but the double crossing and duplicity is the real loop-the-loop, awesome roller-coaster star attraction.

It's the perfect way to induct young adult readers into treacherous and bloodthirsty fantasy fiction.

**Claire Nicholls**



**IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...**

**Half Bad**  
**Sally Green**  
Poor Nathan, born half white witch, half black witch. No wonder he's confused. Which should he become?

Author: Tim Akers Publisher: Titan Books Price: £7.99 Released: 19 January

## THE PAGAN NIGHT A new epic fantasy dawns

**With its traditional** medieval-era-plus-magic formula, we expected *The Pagan Night* to be enjoyable but formulaic. In the first few chapters, that's what you get. The reader is thrown into standard fantasy, with people, places and factions all pelted at you to make sure you know this is a real world, brimming with all kinds of life and history, while grounding us with things we recognise.

It's tricky to get right, and in its first few chapters *The Pagan Night* doesn't do a great job. It's forgivable, though; it feels as though perhaps author Tim Akers has spent many thousands of hours living in this world, and is insistent on sweeping you up in it.

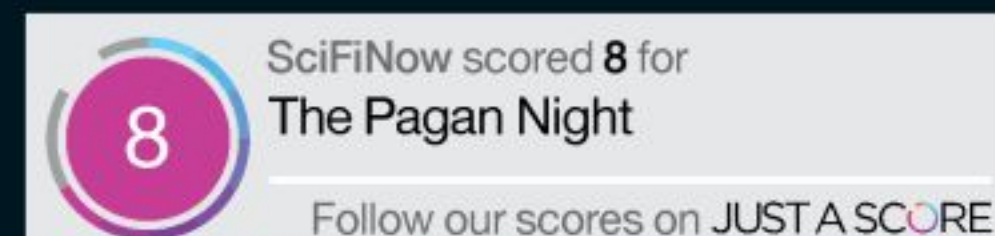
However, the powerful men obtusely discussing events and performing underhand deeds whose significance has yet to be revealed soon give way to the meat of the story, and as more characters are introduced, the book loses its ties to genre tropes.

*The Pagan Night* follows several characters and their stories as the

tensions between regions build through military campaigns, skirmishes and full-scale battles, fights with wild and insane gods that haunt the land, a ruling Church with mysterious intentions and the Pagan followers breaking away from that. You might not relate to any of the characters, but you will certainly be interested in finding out what happens to them next.

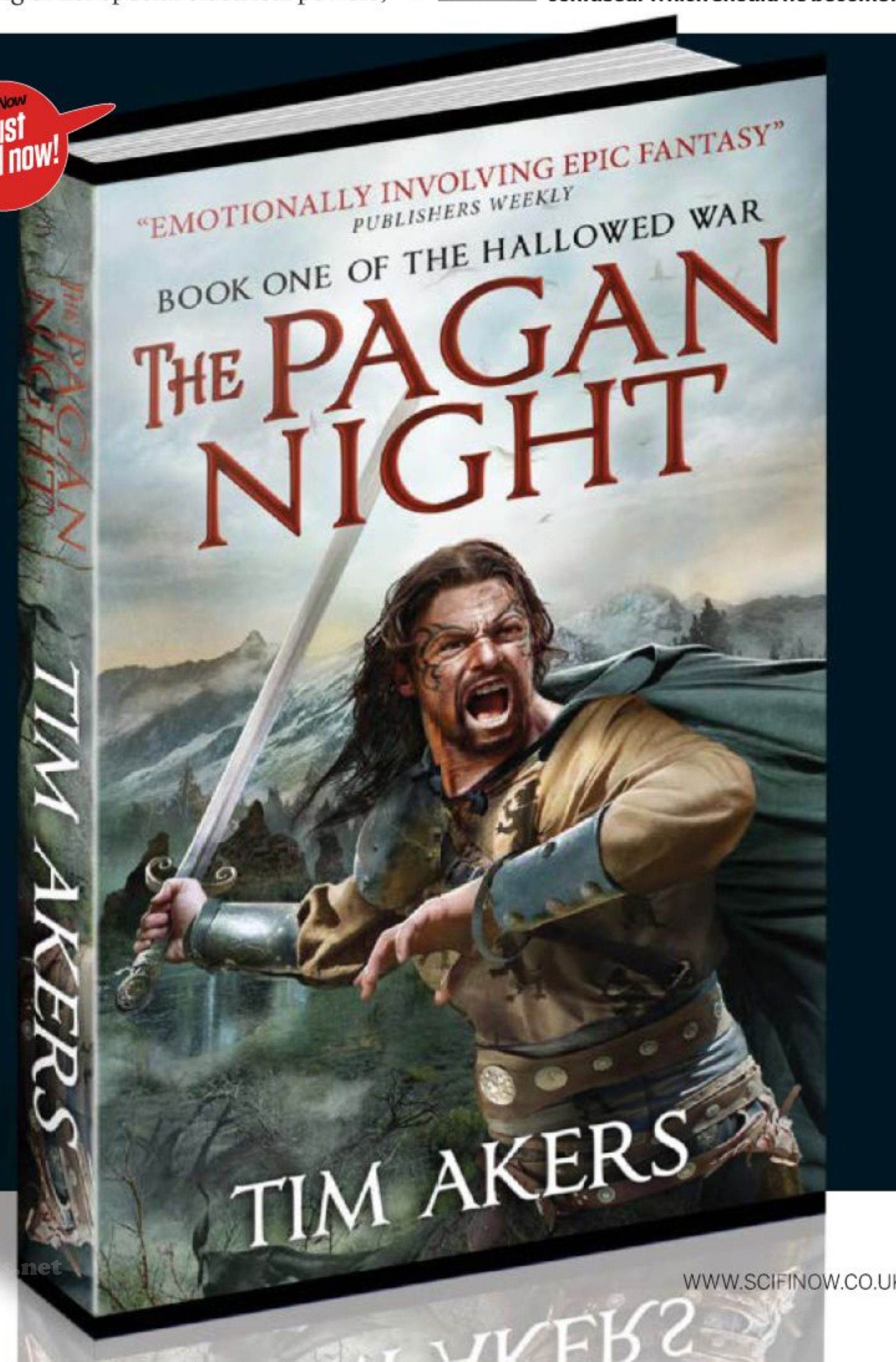
We would have loved the first few chapters to have been more engaging, and the world sticks to a heteronormative template, but ultimately *The Pagan Night* builds up beautifully, creating a riveting world.

**Rebecca Richards**



**IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...**

**A Game Of Thrones**  
**George RR Martin**  
The clear comparison here with its warring characters, though *The Pagan Night* is less concerned with titillation.





**MARTIN A. SAUNDERS**

# INSURMOUNTABLE ODDS

**BOOK I OF WHEN STARS FALL**

They have no  
idea what's  
coming...

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# The



Charlie Jane Anders on writing witches, scientists and the end of days in her debut novel, *All The Birds In The Sky* WORDS JONATHAN HATFULL

# Science



# Of

# Magic



Charlie Jane Anders' *All The Birds In The Sky* really is something special. The debut novel from the Hugo Award winner (for novelette *Six Months, Three Days*) and managing editor of website *io9* has got witches, potentially devastating scientific discoveries, talking animals and what could very well be the end of our world, but at its core it's the story of a friendship between two people who grow up together, grow apart, and find each other again when everything is on the brink of going to hell. So it's kind of a surprise to hear that Anders' original idea was something a lot less... affecting.

"My original concept was 'witch versus mad scientist,'" laughs Anders. "It would be them fighting each other, some kind of zany thing where they would be setting death traps, like spy versus spy, almost. I had a month where I had a document called 'Mad Scientist Versus Witch' that I was putting a bunch of stuff into, and then I thought, 'Actually, what if they're friends?'"

The result is a book that has been labelled a masterpiece by none other than Michael Chabon (the author of *The Amazing Adventures Of Kavalier And Clay* obviously knows something about Great American Novels), a sci-fi fantasy firmly rooted in the real world that doesn't let the genre get in the way of its characters.

"The first couple of drafts were much more zany and Douglas Adams-y, with a lot of wacky stuff going on," she remembers. "But over time I started to think of it more as a relationship story, and that was the part that really interested me. I felt it gave it more grounding and allowed the more zany, weird ideas to feel anchored to something. The more I loaded it up with zany weirdness, and especially the more I was kind of laughing at the characters and putting them in absurd situations and poking fun at them, the less it allowed you to actually invest in them. And so there was a really painful process of peeling back some of the goofiness so that it felt more natural."

The two central characters meet in middle school, where Patricia has just learned that she's a witch and Laurence has just invented a watch that allows him to travel forward in time by two seconds. They're both struggling with parents that don't understand them, they're both outcasts at school, and it's their shared outsider status that initially pulls them together. "It's funny – people always say that high school is hell," Anders tells us. "I think that actually middle school,

which in the United States is 10 years old to 14, I think of that as being the actual hell. High school is also kind of hellish, but the years where you're actually going into puberty and dealing with savage social structures and cliques, and just craziness, I think that's actually the worst time."

However, when we jump forward to meet the characters again as adults in their 20s, we discover that finding other people like themselves hasn't really helped them feel more accepted. "When you're young and isolated, you think that if you could just find other people like yourself that understand what you're dealing with then your life would be perfect and awesome," Anders explains. "And then you grow up and move to the city, and you get to be surrounded by other Goths or mad scientists or witches or whatever, and that doesn't suddenly make your life perfect or wonderful, because they're never going to be the exact same person as you, and they're going to have all these expectations of you. I really wanted to get you into their sense of isolation as kids and make you really feel that, and then jump ahead ten years and they're no longer isolated; they now each have their own community that's separate, but it's still not magically perfect and wonderful."

Both communities are working separately on a solution to the woes facing our dying planet. Laurence's team of scientists is developing a way to transport people off world, while Patricia and the witches have a final solution that is very radical indeed. The ecological concerns certainly feel relevant, but Anders took great care to stay on the right side of preachy. "As a reader, the more people are lecturing me and the more people are talking down to me, the less I can sympathise with them," she explains. "It would have been very easy to have the witches stand around and talk about how society is terrible, but I really tried to not go overboard with that, because I don't want people to just feel like witches are assholes!"

"I naturally started to think about environmental problems, because I think that is something that's going to be a huge thing in the near future," she continues. "But also, the more I got into the relationship between Laurence and Patricia – the mad scientist and the witch – and their different ways of looking at things, the more the book started to be about nature and about our relationship to nature, and having huge natural disasters happen just felt like an extension of that. I wrote the thing where a giant superstorm destroys the east coast of the United States, and I thought, 'This is much too far-fetched; people are going to think this is just completely out of left-field', and then Sandy happened and New York was severely affected."

Despite the richness of the world she has created here, Anders tells us that her next novel is "as different from *All The Birds In The Sky* as I can possibly make it," and she's just as keen to discuss the work of current authors like David Mitchell ("just incredible"), NK Jemison ("I'm always looking forward to seeing what she comes up with") and Jo Walton ("always amazing"). "There's a lot of really great people writing right now," she enthuses. "There's a lot of unusual work in science fiction and fantasy, and it makes me really excited." She can certainly count herself among them.



*All The Birds In The Sky* will be released on 26 July, published by Titan Books.





## Our fragile world

Five environmental science fiction novels you need to read

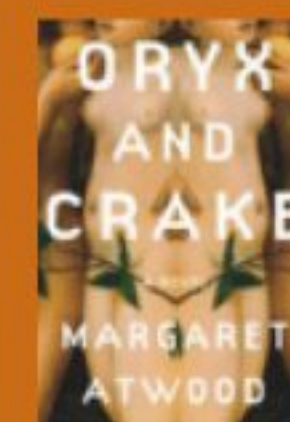


### **The Water Knife**

*Paolo Bacigalupi*

The author of *The Wind-Up Girl* paints a brutal but plausible picture of an American South devastated by drought,

where states fiercely fight each other for water supplies.



### **Oryx And Crake**

*Margaret Atwood*

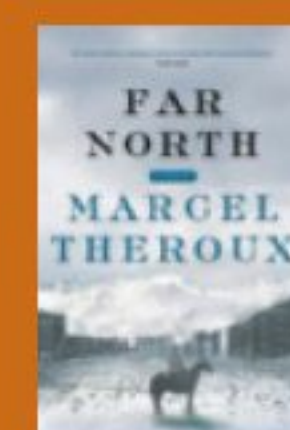
Atwood's novel shows how our world was forever changed by a mad scientist named Crake through the eyes of his childhood friend, who now might be the last human.



### **The Drowned World**

*JG Ballard*

Ballard's first novel finds a world where the polar ice caps have melted and London has become a flooded tropical jungle in which our biologist hero begins to lose himself.



### **Far North**

*M John Harrison*

Global warming and war have wrecked Earth in this odd western, in which American refugees have ended up in Siberia. Our heroine is a sheriff who sets out to find the world her parents left behind.



### **Memory Of Water**

*Emmi Itäranta*

This acclaimed debut from Finnish author Itäranta is set in a world where wars are fought over the dwindling water, and a 17-year-old girl takes on an incredible responsibility and terrible danger.





# BOOK CLUB

The Art Of Charlie Chan Hock Chye // Crossed +100: Volume 1

**Details** Writer: Sonny Liew Artists: Sonny Liew  
Publisher: Epigram Books Price: £23 Released: Out now

## THE ART OF CHARLIE CHAN HOCK CHYE

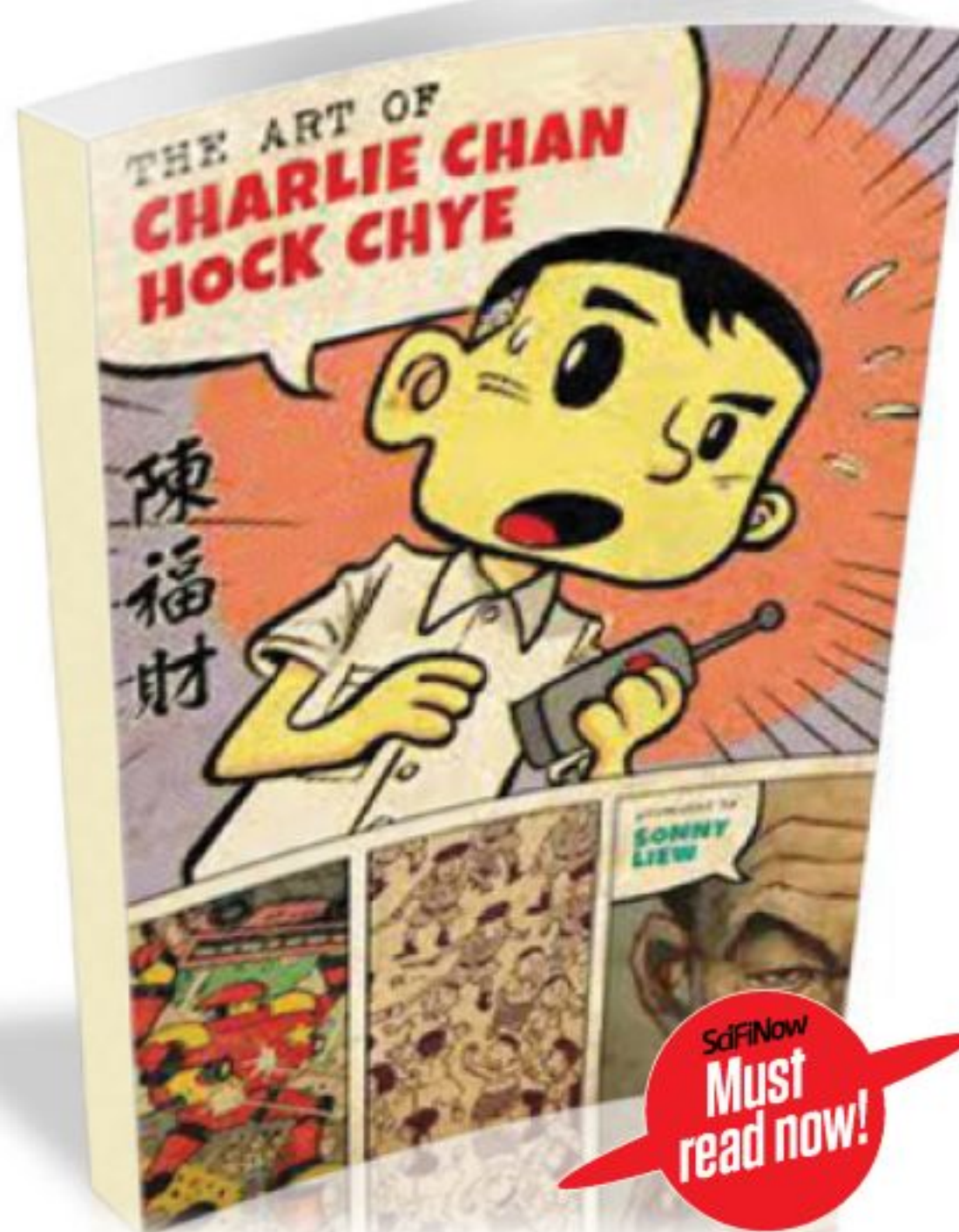
**Singapore sling**

**Bigger, more rewarding** and far more complex than anyone might anticipate, *The Art of Charlie Chan Hock Chye* is the biography of a fictional career in comics, one that manages to tell the political history of Singapore through a history of comics.

Malaysian writer and artist Sonny Liew (*Malinky Robot*) shows off his incredible versatility with convincing recreations of period strips from the eponymous hero, parodying the wholesome sci-fi escapism of *Astro Boy*'s Osamu Tezuka and gruelling Fifties war comics, Silver Age Marvel and DC superheroics, and the conceptual epics of *Bandes Dessinées*, while maintaining a simple 'narration' style for his 'interviews' with Chan or recreations of key events in his life that are more recognisable as Liew's own.

The subject matter might be hard going for those who aren't predisposed to history or politics, with rather more talking heads from Singapore's 'great' statesmen than giant robots or cockroach-themed vigilantes, but it's a rewarding experience, full of footnotes and tangents that immerses the reader in the city state's long and bumpy road from colonial rule to independence, authoritarianism and then democracy.

Arresting and affecting, the whole project is clearly the end result of a journey that began in Liew's previous works. 2009's *Malinky Robot* was a



SciFiNow  
Must read now!

warm-hearted portrait of South East Asian urban life that used the lens of a junkyard-punk future to magnify the small realities of the present, while 2014's *The Shadow Hero* (with writer Greg Luen Yang) used the tropes of Golden Age comics to explore the Asian-American experience, both in the Thirties and in the present.

**James Hoare**

SciFiNow scored **9** for  
The Art of Charlie Chan Hock Chye

Follow our scores on [JUST A SCORE](#)



**IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...**

**Liquid City**

**Various**

The Liew-helmed anthology series shows SE Asia through the lens of sci-fi, horror and weird fiction.



**Details** Writer: Alan Moore Artist: Gabriel Andrade  
Publisher: Avatar Press/Titan Price: £14.99 Released: Out now

## CROSSED +100: VOLUME 1

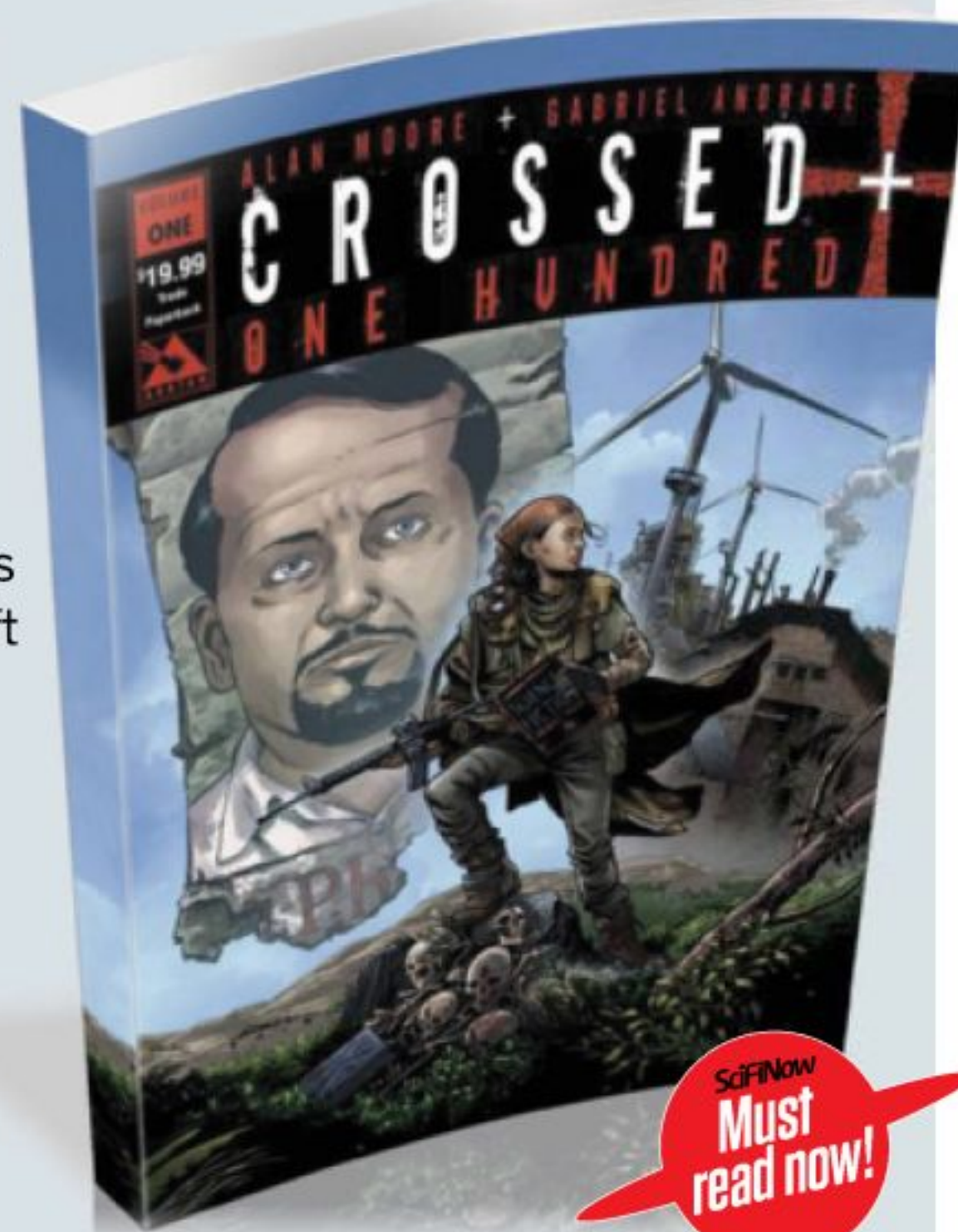
**Less is Moore**

**He may be** ideologically opposed to letting others play with his toys, but the druidic sage of comics Alan Moore steps into the profane toy chest of Garth Ennis to offer up his best conventional comic run since 1999's *Top 10*.

While other *Crossed* collaborators stuck to the 28 Days of Sodom Later scenario Ennis left in place – the world on the eve or in the aftermath of a contagion that turns those it afflicts into leering psychopaths, gleefully murdering, maiming and raping their way around the globe – Moore makes it his own.

Set a century on from the outbreak, he creates a *Mad Max*-style frontier world with its own Burgess-like argot and culture. On the surface it's all very familiar, but Moore has clearly planned all of this out with that fierce attention to detail that made the likes of *Watchmen* and *From Hell* such dense and rewarding reads. His innovations are lurking in all the small things, and eventually the internal logic of the futurespeak becomes second nature.

It's unusually 'gentle' for an Avatar book – and indeed a Moore one, something of a relief after 2010's unlikeable *Neonomicon*. The story unfolds with a less-is-more pacing, and veteran *Crossed* artist Gabriel Andrade seems to relish detailing shantytowns and war wagons instead of orgies.



SciFiNow  
Must read now!

Amazingly, it's possible to become desensitised to the world of *Crossed*, but through storytelling prowess and characters that are more than survival-horror archetypes, Moore does the impossible. Page by page, this master craftsman eases our guard back down, so that when the bad times come, they *hurt*.

**James Hoare**

SciFiNow scored **8** for  
Crossed +100: Volume 1

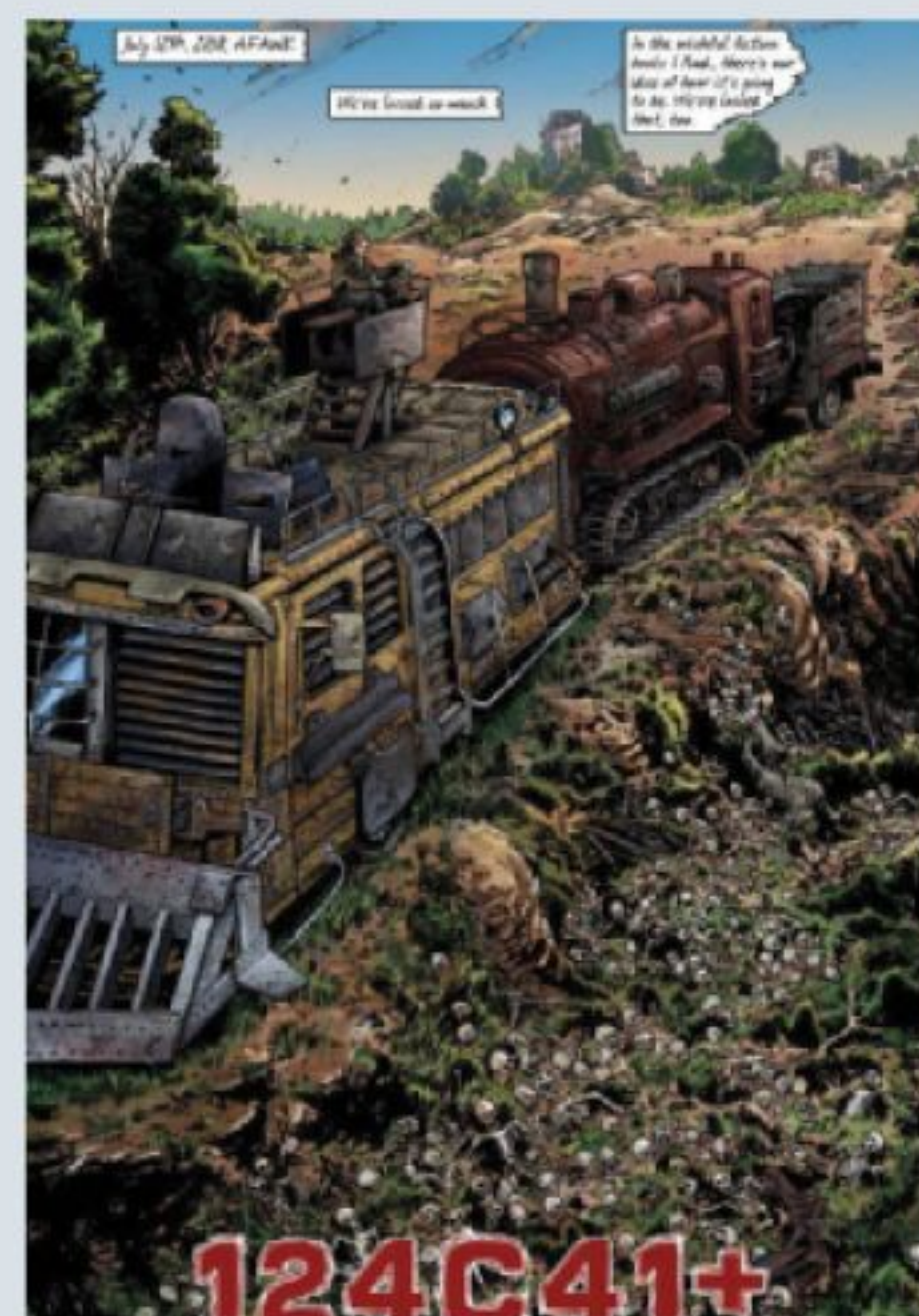
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**IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...**

**The Massive: Black Pacific**  
Brian Wood/ Kristian Donaldson, Garry Brown

This post-apocalyptic gem is a triumph of world-building.





**Details** Writers: Alan C Martin and others Artists: Jamie Hewlett and others  
Publisher: Titan Price: £14.88 Released: Out now

# 21ST CENTURY TANK GIRL

**Grrrls Aloud**

Collecting the first *Tank Girl* strip from original artist and co-creator Jamie 'Gorillaz' Hewlett in 20 years, *21st Century Tank Girl* is an album-sized anthology from a plethora of creators.

It's short, but that's for the best, as the character has always struggled with holding a genuine narrative, and is best consumed

over one page shortly after reading a Courtney Love interview. Courtney Love isn't available, but *21st Century Tank Girl* manages to crank out a fun mix of short fiction, pin-ups and comic strips from assorted creators, with the shanken-aresol art style of Jim Mahfood the standout contribution.

As for the headline act, well, Hewlett's return is potentially disappointing for purists, with some dense colouring that is worlds away from the monochrome or lightly coloured original strips. Also, cock-shaped spaceships weren't even funny when *Lexx* did it.

**James Hoare**



SciFiNow scored **6** for  
21st Century Tank Girl  
Follow our scores on [JUST A SCORE](#)

**Details** Writer: Jean-Yves Ferri Artists: Didier Conrad  
Publisher: Orion Price: £7.99 Released: Out now

# ASTERIX AND THE MISSING SCROLL

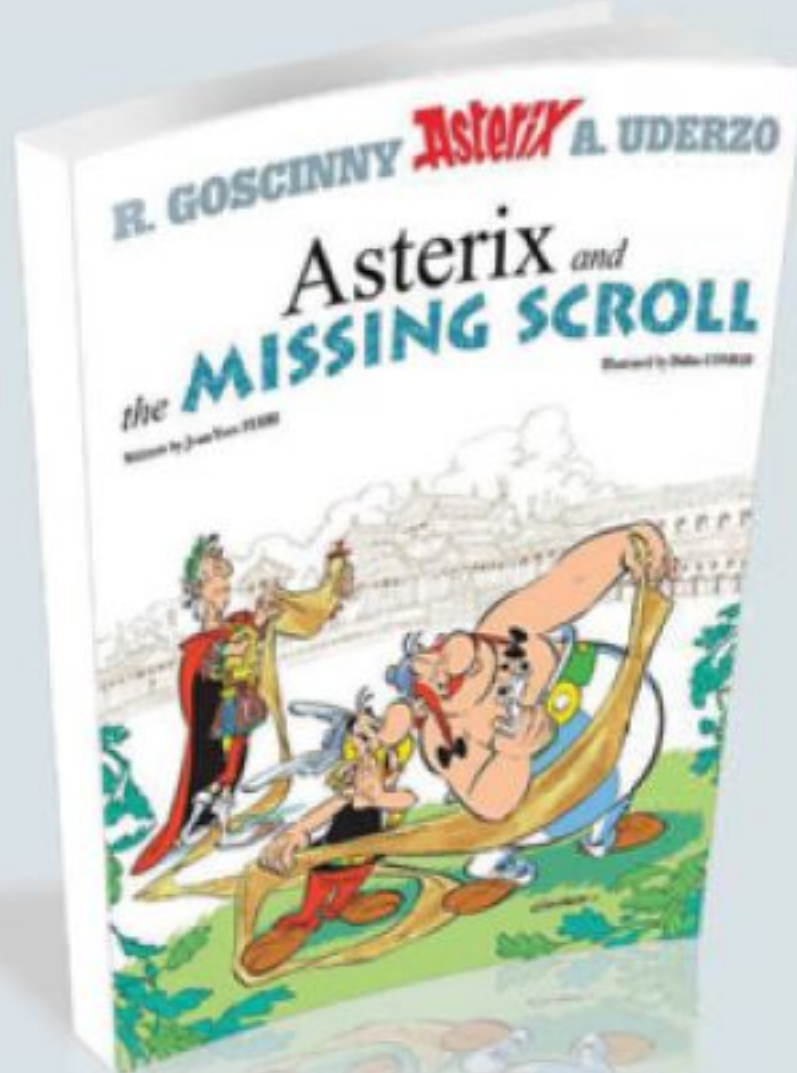
**Gaul power**

It gladdens the heart to see another *Asterix* book, 56 years on from the first, but it truly makes that heart sing to know that new creative duo Jean-Yves Ferri and Didier Conrad haven't lost the formula for René Goscinny and Albert Uderzo's magic potion.

Inspired by Wikileaks and tabloid media, *Asterix And The Missing Scroll* is smart, funny, and full of topical references and wordplay that will have parents sniggering while kids are distracted by the fights. The history is sound too, building on Caesar's aggrandisement of his Gaulish campaigns.

The only sore spot is an all-too-faithful recreation of Uderzo's art style that problematically sees African slaves drawn with big red lips and Marmite skin tones redolent of *Daily Mail* cartoons.

**James Hoare**



SciFiNow scored **7** for  
Asterix and the Missing Scroll  
Follow our scores on [JUST A SCORE](#)

**Details** Writers: Jason Latour/Robbie Thompson Artists: Robbi Rodriguez/Stacey Lee  
Publisher: Marvel/Panini Price: £12.99 / £13.29 Released: Out now

# SPIDER-GWEN: MOST WANTED/SILK: THE LIFE AND TIMES OF CINDY MOON

**Along came the Spider-Women**

**That Third Wave** Feminism crept into the otherwise lead-lined basement bunker of superhero comics in the last few years and began rifling through the back issues is probably something of a terrible shock for some. The original 1973 death of Gwen Stacy is now firmly recast as the Ground Zero for Women in Refrigerators, but while Peter Parker's moment of character-defining pain is the problem, 2014's big fun *Spider-Verse* crossover gave us a solution in the fan-favourite *Spider-Gwen*.

In this alternate universe, Gwen got a spider-bite and Peter died, it's a neat twist, and in a rare writing venture from mostly artist Jason Latour, she gets to have colourful millennial adventures that show a few neat little twists on the mythology. Robbi Rodriguez is the real star, partly for his art – a painterly mix of fluid lines and anime energy that sets Gwen up as a book apart – and for his dogged defence of the character against some gruesome oversexualisation.

*Silk*, set in the mainline Marvel universe, is business as usual as far as franchised secondary heroes go. Cindy Moon has lots of drama, her origin story is webbed so closely to Spider-Man that he's lurking on every third page, ready with advice so she can push him away, or attempt to hook up with her so she can reciprocate and then push him



away. It's reductive and boring, and the cat-fight with Black Cat, the 'wronged ex-girlfriend', isn't flattering.

It's tough not to be a tiny bit sad that neither book is written by a woman, but *Spider-Gwen* is a victory for fresh, fun storytelling that sits comfortably alongside Gillen and McKelvie's *Young Avengers*, Wilson and Alphonso's *Ms Marvel*, and Babs Tarr and Cameron Stewart's *Batgirl*.

**James Hoare**

SciFiNow scored **7** for  
Spider-Gwen: Most Wanted  
Follow our scores on [JUST A SCORE](#)

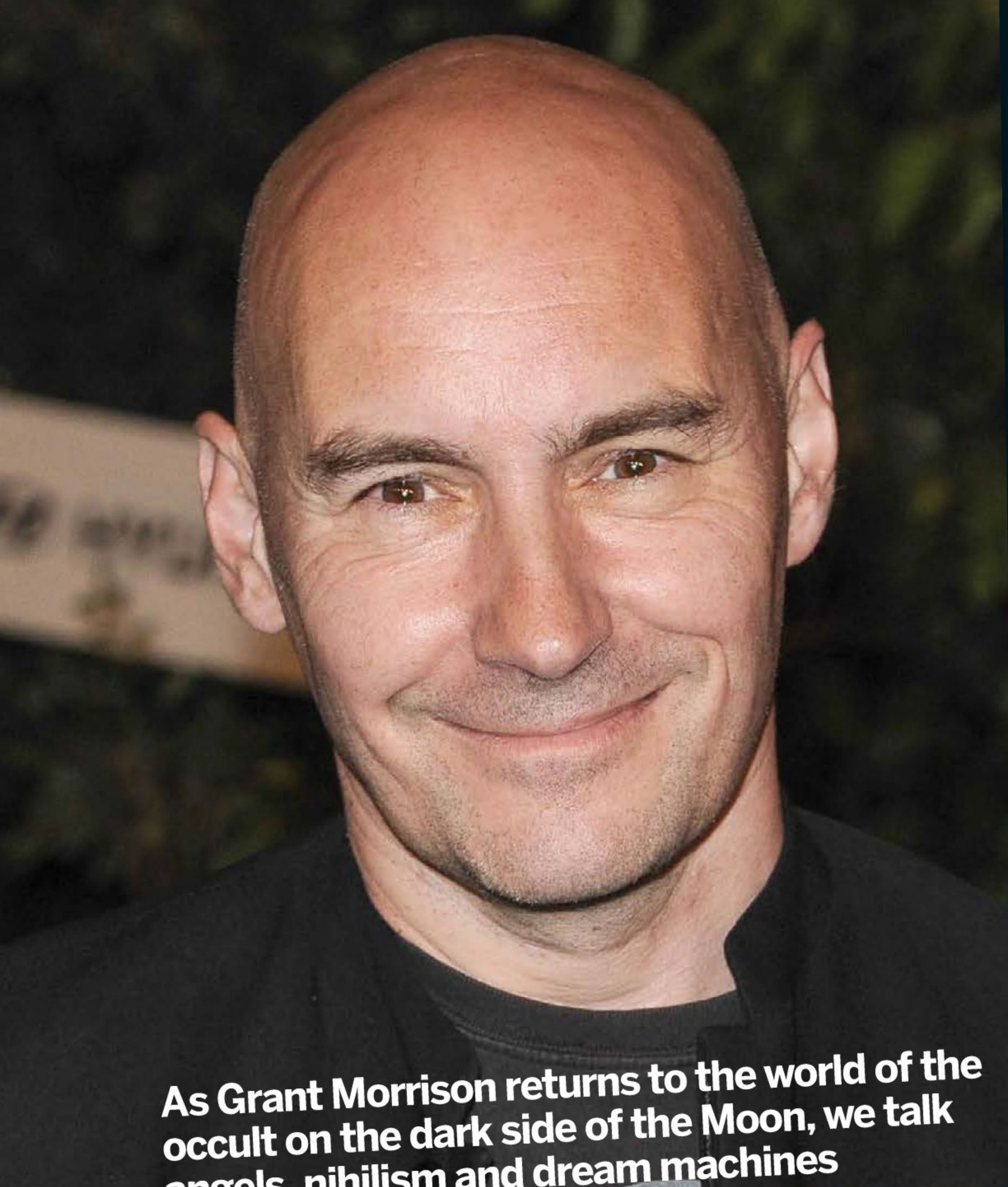
SciFiNow scored **5** for  
Silk: The Life and Times of Cindy Moon  
Follow our scores on [JUST A SCORE](#)



**IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...**  
**Ms Marvel: No Normal**  
G Willow Wilson/Adrian Alphonso  
Another legacy character gets a Tumblr-licious reboot in one of Marvel's best books.







As Grant Morrison returns to the world of the occult on the dark side of the Moon, we talk angels, nihilism and dream machines

# NAMELESS CREATOR

WORDS LAURA SNEDDON

**T**O SAY THAT 2015 WAS THE YEAR OF GRANT MORRISON WOULD BE TO IMPLY THAT EACH PREVIOUS YEAR SOMEHOW WAS NOT, AND YET WITH THE MULTIVERSITY

finally cresting high as Frank Quitely's *Pax Americana* issue won particular acclaim, *Annihilator* with Frazer Irving coming to a spectacular close and classic works including *The Invisibles*, *Zenith* and *The Filth* receiving new luxury editions, somehow Morrison excelled even himself.

Aside from redefining DC's multiverse, one title caught readers' imagination in a different way. *Nameless*, with artist Chris Burnham and colourist Nathan Fairbairn, saw Morrison return to the realm of the mystic. For fans of such seminal works as *The Invisibles*, a text riddled with sigils and chaos magicks, it was a fever dream come true, but unlike the countless annotations that exist for previous titles, *Nameless* has not yet inspired such devotion.

An occult hustler recruited by a consortium of billionaire futurists is sent to the dark side of the moon in a desperate mission to save the planet from an extinction-level asteroid impact. The asteroid, named Xibalba – the Mayan 'Place of Fear' – sports an occult symbol on its side betraying its origins as a fragment of the lost fifth planet, Marduk. An epic cosmic war millions of years ago houses horrors aboard this enormous Xibalba – horrors that the team look set to unknowingly unleash.

The comic begins as it means to go on, introducing the reader to a man named Nameless, who serves as a kind of bridge between the occult and the sci-fi.





### Where did the idea for the *Nameless* comic come from?

I had this idea years ago to do an update of HP Lovecraft's *At The Mountains Of Madness*, set on the Moon. It didn't take long to realise that the Moon – a world bereft of sinister penguins, to the best of my knowledge – might not make the best setting for Lovecraft's story, but it left the grain of an idea in the back of my mind.

Later, I was reading about alleged alien contactee Nancy Lieder, who prophesied a collision between Earth and a giant unknown planet called Nibiru, or Planet X. This once-in-a-lifetime planetary apocalypse was predicted to occur sometime in 2003, resulting in the inconvenient obliteration of all life. If it happened, I seem to have slept through it. Add to all that a big collection of atheist writings edited by Christopher Hitchens that I worked my way through while ill in bed for a few days one year. All these bits and pieces of things stuck to the central 'Mountains Of Madness on the Moon' notion, but none of it caught fire until, right after working together on *Batman Incorporated*, Chris Burnham and I decided to do a short creator-owned project together. His only criteria: six issues, set in space, with monsters. So I dug out my half-arsed notes for the Nibiru project, got serious and turned it into something that felt more personal and rewarding.

We're all zombies now, I'm told – consuming restlessly, trying and failing to overlook the smell of our deteriorating flesh, tanned graveyard blue in the screenlight as we shamle through a post-traumatic landscape, hungry for meaning. The popular nihilist position is that we are all the walking dead. On this level playing field, the traditional zombie can no longer claim any special consideration. He is no longer the Other or the monster, but one of us, with only slightly worse breath and no more significance.

While only a fool could deny the visceral horror of a formerly dead granny lumbering out of the tallboy with a hard-on for your brain's left hemisphere, it's never going to happen in real life, and gets less and less frightening the more we see actors on TV pretending it's happening to them. The devastating, disillusioning truth is this; there are living things and dead things, but there are no living dead things, or if there are, they clearly prefer to keep themselves to themselves. Zombies, therefore, are as likely to threaten you in real life as carnivorous unicorns or serial-killing fairies.

In *Nameless* we're dealing with the fear of things we know to be real: cruelty, insanity, isolation, self-deception, futility – a typical night out in Glasgow, basically. We



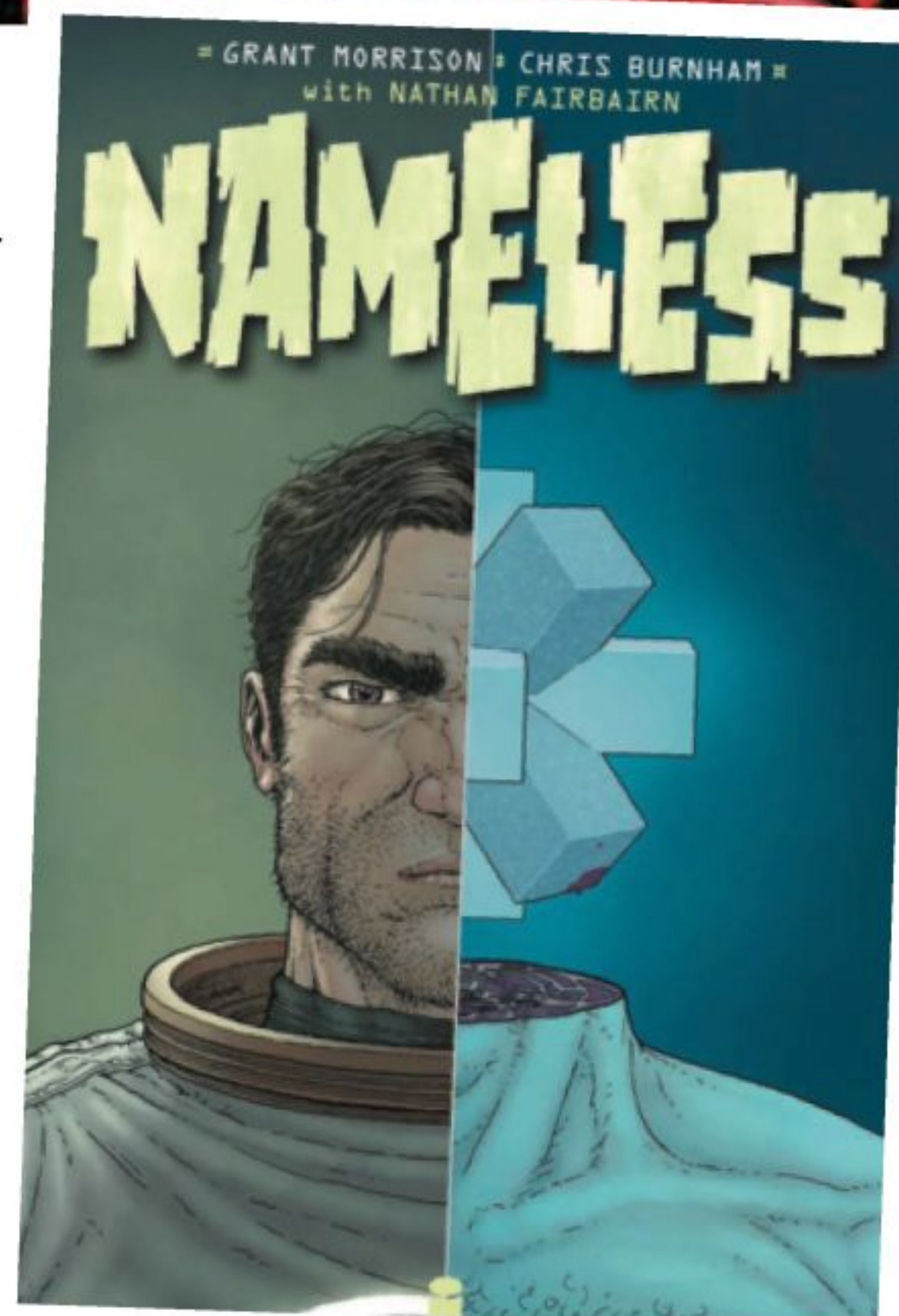
Never trust the men of fish.



dramatise and personify these horrors in often lurid detail in the book, but ultimately the unease comes from their mundane, awful familiarity.

**Opening in Glasgow gives the comic a somewhat more realistic base, while the Scottish vernacular is uncommon in US published comics. Is there a specific reason for making *Nameless* a fellow Scot like yourself?**

As the comic got more intense and personal, as I burrowed deeper into the Abyss, I decided to wrap my own environment more fully into the story – and I wanted to see Chris Burnham draw Byres Road and the gates to the Botanics into an American horror comic! The fish on top of the flagpole freaked me out when I was



a little kid – inducing what I can only recall as my first experience of stark, numinous terror – so it's in there. Then our hero goes up the Clyde near where I live in the country.

Weirdly enough, Chris drew a prospect from the Veiled Lady's window that shows a randomly chosen section of the Byres Road skyline – and yet, without realising it, he had managed to accurately depict the exact view from my recently deceased mum's former living room.

**"Zirom triam ipam ipamis" is a phrase that pops up early on in the story. Do you write with an expectation that some or all of the readership will, as *Nameless* says, "look it up"?**





# BOOK CLUB

Grant Morrison

➤ Absolutely. The internet allows access to the whole corpus of human knowledge, and I write all my comics with that in mind. If I drop a particular reference, I expect readers will look it up. If they do it will enhance their understanding and enjoyment of the story and perhaps open up some interesting areas of exploration.

**There's a great deal of the occult layered within the pages here, but is there any actual danger in including some of this knowledge within a comic book?**

I think knowledge is a good thing, and I prefer to think it always finds its own level. Which is to say the 'ultimate secrets' of magic would make no sense to the novice and most likely put him/her off to some extent. It's not as easy as people might imagine to 'misuse' esoteric knowledge. Without the understanding that long, hard experience brings, a lot of the high-level or scary stuff has no context beyond the glamorous or superficial.

**Chris Burnham and Nathan Fairbairn have done a terrific job in bringing this very bloody story to life – how does the collaboration work when it comes to things like layout and symbolism?**

I tend to leave the layouts to Chris, who is a master of doing comic-books that look like comic-books and not film storyboards. I sometimes have to push or cajole artists into doing odd panel layouts, but then there are artists like Chris, who make a point of treating the page as an experimental design opportunity. It's work like this that really separates what comics can do from other media, and Chris will always come up with something I wouldn't have thought of. *Nameless* is a showcase for his brilliance in this department; think of the crushed and flattened perspectives of the universe-in-a-room scenes, the claustrophobic chopped-up panel shapes in the spaceship, or the way he's able to evoke scale and the sublime in a way that gives real weight and mass to all that iron brutalist architecture.

As you'll see at the end, many of the odd layouts are based on the cut-out shapes in the revolving tube of the Brion Gysin Dreamachine. I thought this would might foreshadow the ending too much, but no one noticed!

As I say, we didn't want to go the comic-as-movie route; both of us had the idea of composing *Nameless* like a piece of music, something that would get in under the rational mind and go for those deeper, creepier gut feelings. The panel shapes and storytelling style are orchestrated to that effect. It's an even more tightly structured thing than our *Batman* stuff, but here the result is more seductive and insidious, I think.



Welcome to the dark side. On the Moon...



**It's fitting that a comic so full of occult references sees the protagonist travel to the Moon, a place we view as a mystic symbol existing in light and dark cycles, these such cycles apply to your work. Has anything in particular inspired your 'New Bleak', or is it more of an exorcism or test?**

The ten years from 2004 were fairly emotionally fraught; I watched my dad die slowly of cancer, then my mum declined via dementia unto death. A lot of close family members passed away in the same time frame, and some beloved pets too, so the abject futility of it all was weighing on my mind and informing all my work. Hence, in particular, *The Filth*, *Final Crisis*, the *Batman* run, *Happy!*, *Annihilator*, and especially *Nameless*.

Through this period, the 21st century was revealing itself to be a far less friendly and reassuring global playground than many of us had foppishly hoped for. Civilians and young soldiers were dying in desert bloodbaths, young kids at home were cutting themselves and the headlines were howling, ratings-grabbing, anxiety-inducing hymns to the catastrophic decline and fall of civilisation.

Looking for some laughs, I turned to the writing of nihilist and pessimist philosophers. I discovered a whole black rainbow of ideas and inspiration.

Highlights were Ray Brassier's jargon-dense *Nihil Unbound* and Thomas Ligotti's sprightly, mordant *The Conspiracy Against The Human Race*. Ligotti's book introduced

## Morrison's Greatest Hits

The 5 best comics of the comics legend



### Annihilator (Legendary Comics)

Grant Morrison, Frazer Irving

Loser and degenerate

Ray Spass has a last-shot script to write and an inoperable brain tumour that turns out to be a clump of data belonging to interstellar space criminal Max Nomax. The script is the story of Nomax's life, and if Spass doesn't finish it in a week, he dies.



### The Invisibles (Vertigo)

Grant Morrison, Steve Yeowell et al

An anarchist tale of a cell of The Invisible

College, an organisation that battles physical and psychic oppression using magic, time travel and violence. Widely believed to be the inspiration for the first *Matrix* film.



### The Filth (Vertigo)

Grant Morrison, Chris Weston, Gary Erskine

The spiritual successor to *The Invisibles* takes a darker

path in the adventures of Greg Feely, a man whose life revolves around his cat and masturbation before being re-activated as an agent of The Hand.



### We3 (Vertigo)

Grant Morrison, Frank Quitely, Jamie Grant

The heartbreaking story of three

escapees from a lab who are prototype 'animal weapons'. Have a box of tissues at the ready for this modern classic. A screenplay is in the works.



### The Multiversity (DC Comics)

Grant Morrison, Frank Quitely et al

The highly anticipated

culmination of Morrison's work reshaping the DC universe, this is a brain-bending romp across multiple realities and an absolute must read for all superhero fans.





## BOOK CLUB

Nameless Creator



I've got nothing but good things to say about the Pit of Meaninglessness, but I don't think any kind of 'ism' can hope to encompass the complex, multi-faceted nature of things.

*Nameless* is the culmination and refinement of that whole period of thought, and marks its definite conclusion. In qabalistic terms, I crossed the Abyss into the sphere of Binah, an occasion commemorated by the completion of the upcoming *Wonder Woman* book with Yanick Paquette. The end of *Nameless* is fairly explicit in its evocation of Binah's Dark Goddess archetype and in Crowleyn/Kenneth Grant terms, it can be read as Ma'at, the Goddess of Truth, taking the century out of the destructive, rock-star terrorist hands of her brother Horus.

Which is why, at the root of *Nameless* is a very simple story of twins, a boy and a girl, hence all the reflections and doubling of images. The twins are also the Two Towers and the twin pylons of the Tarot Moon card, which stood once between Reality and Illusion. These Two Towers can also be seen as 11, the number of Daath, the Abyss. The 11 is also the pause button on a recording device – another hiatus, or gap, or Abyss. And so on.

In the end, there was something almost amusingly petulant about nihilism and the pessimist view; to suffer disappointment that the universe is without intrinsic meaning suggests some investment in the idea that it could or should have meaning in the first place. It comes across as a thwarted religious impulse. Most of us in the secular West have grown up in a world informed by existentialism, atheism and the dehumanising effects of the Market. Unless they're very religious, very young or very dim, few people expect the universe to provide us with meaning or purpose any more. At best, we get that from our consumption of the fruits of the entertainment industries.

Magic trumps nihilism – given a malignantly useless universe, given the grotesque self-awareness which tells us in 4am whispers that we must die for no reason and be forgotten forever, the practice of magic is the sane creative response. Why not make an art of our inexplicable, defiant ability to find meaning and significance everywhere we look – in spite of several very clever people telling us there are no such things? Enchant freely. No one's watching. No one's judging.

**Bizarrely, the idea that the evils of our world – the ones that make this comic** ➡



me to Peter Wessel Zappfe and the bleak *Last Messiah*, which advocates species suicide – “be infertile and let the earth be silent after ye” – in the chilly liturgical language of Lovecraftian cosmic horror.

From there, it was merrily on to *Speculative Realism* and the various schools of thought swirling in that orbit, with Graham Harman's work having particular relevance to my experience of the Buddhist shunyata. Sideways reading brought me to Reza Negarestani's monstrous, brilliant *Cyclonopedia*. It was a dizzying flood of rich and dismal novelty, as if having gazed into the Abyss I'd got back not only got a wink, but a party invite.

So in terms of the sheer inspiration and creative energy the Void has yielded so far,

Now that's one ugly mother...



And we thought Dean Winchester had it bad...







HERE  
IS YOUR  
REWARD.



FOR  
RETURN OF  
THE KEY.

WHO  
ARE YOU?

NAMELESS.

WHAT IS  
HUMAN!

You don't  
know my name.

WHAT IS  
HUMAN!





ever relevant – are caused by a malevolent force out of our own control seems to be a somewhat comforting read on humanity's never-ending desire to destroy itself. On the other hand, that does allude to the tempting exoneration of religion itself. In the world of *Nameless* at least, are religion and evil/chaos one and the same?

For all its fantastic trappings, we wanted the story to be about real things. The idea had developed to include a Lovecraftian Universe B qlippothic creature imprisoned on an asteroid hurling toward Earth – but like zombies, looming Gnostic horror gods and squirming Cthuloid entities from beyond time and space suggest to a modern audience the flamboyance of Goth panto rather than nihilistic gloom. They're too easy to laugh at. Things like that don't really exist – or do they?

It occurred to me that no wars, terrorist activities or large-scale atrocities had ever been carried out in the name of Satan. Cthulhu's charge sheet was similarly spotless. Despite a bad rap in countless stories, these were scarcely the invisible, omnipotent, prying, sadistic and callous monsters I had in mind, but it didn't take long to find the real thing living among us. It's been with us for a while, and it has lots of names, but 'God' will do.

This God is not a supernatural being despite its amorphous, invisible nature and epic lifespan; it takes the form of words, and is 'real' enough to be directly responsible for countless holocausts, holy wars, witch burnings and other acts of mayhem,

rape and butchery. It is a malignant consciousness embedded in words that allow it to replicate via the brains of its human hosts. The complex, contradictory human personality of the host is overwritten and simplified down into a set of simple instructions, with the effect of transforming the creature's victims into single-minded agents, capable of killing or dying in its name. From that perspective, *Nameless* is a story about possession, or radicalisation as it is sometimes called.

Ultimately, the story points out that there is indeed a malevolent intelligence which transcends individual minds, outlives generations and often encourages monstrous deeds – we have its number, and there is no doubt as to its existence – but that doesn't necessarily excuse



us or absolve us of our own personal tendencies towards malevolence. It takes two to tango.

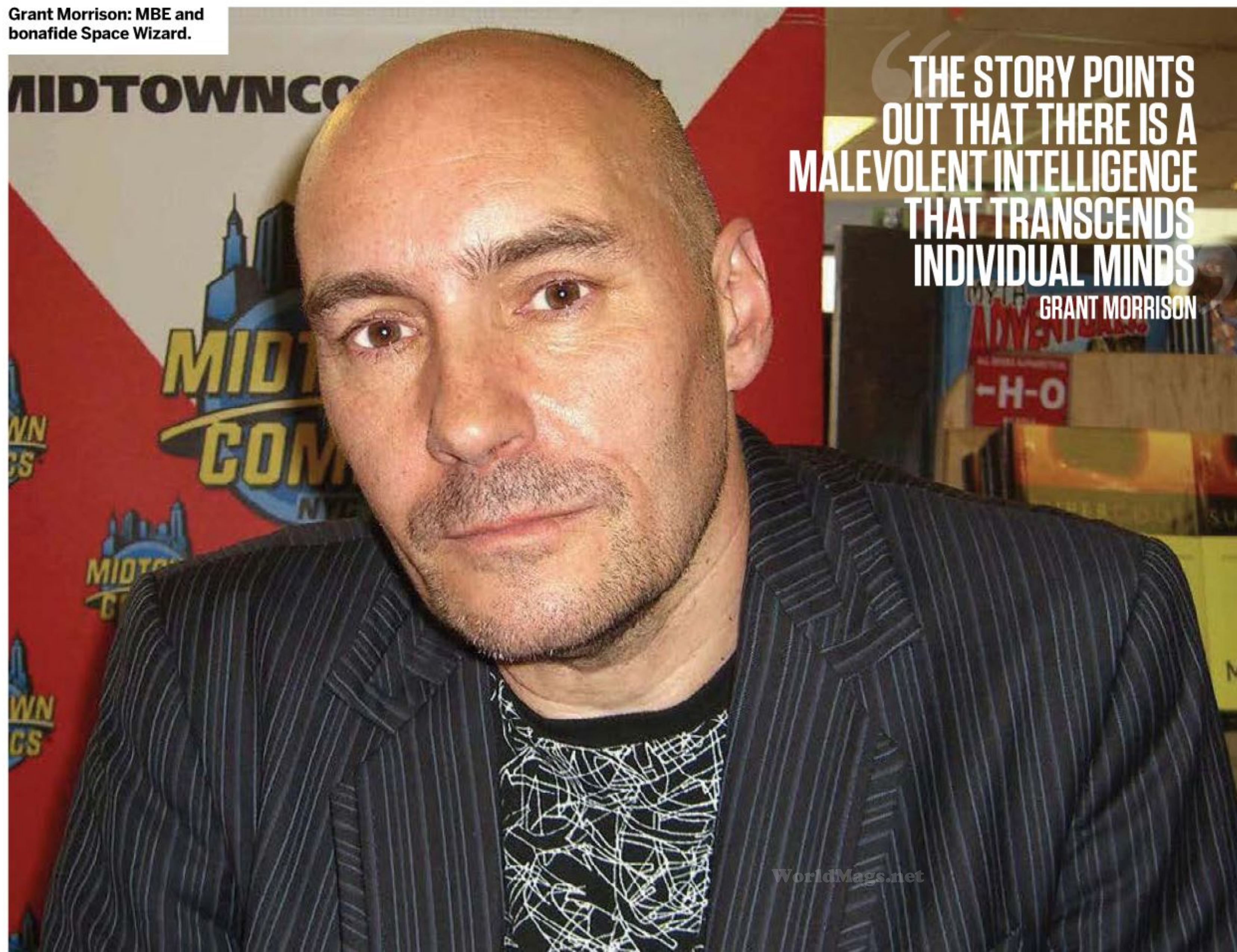
**In a comic where the walls are literally painted with blood, guts and shit, the scene with the mice packs the biggest emotional punch. Was the mice scene included to induce that real emotional reaction, and is that reaction perhaps somewhat at the heart of 'what is human'?**

All of the horrors we depicted on the Tarot cards in the 'burn in Hell' issue were things that human beings do to each other and other living things on a regular basis – the scene with the mice is a reminder that right now in a lab somewhere, mice, rats, dogs, kittens, monkeys, pigs etc are being brutally tortured, deformed, poisoned and traumatised by white-coated, otherwise 'normal' men and women taught to suppress their natural human revulsion while brutalising small and defenceless creatures, to what end? So that more humans will be born and live longer to grossly overpopulate and devastate the planet beyond its ability to recover?

*Nameless* assumes the nihilist position; the emotional reaction you felt is human, but the ability to justify or overlook cruelty, murder and torture is also, sadly, all too human. 🐭

*Nameless* will be available digitally and in paperback from 11 February.

Grant Morrison: MBE and bonafide Space Wizard.



## Fighting The Power

Morrison's best superhero comics



### All-Star Superman

Grant Morrison, Frank Quitely  
Regarded as one of the greatest

Superman comics ever, it draws on the essential elements of the character, and requires no prior knowledge.



### Action Comics: Superman And The Men Of Steel

Grant Morrison, Rags Morales, Andy Kubert

For the most recent relaunch of the DC Universe, the fate of Superman was entrusted to Morrison, who took him back to his socialist roots, making him younger and more naive, battling to save the Earth in just a t-shirt and jeans.



### Batman And Robin: Batman Reborn

Grant Morrison, Frank Quitely, Philip Tan

Morrison's *Batman* run is epic in scope, but this series is a great starting point as following the disappearance of Bruce Wayne, his first and most cheerful protege Dick Grayson takes up the bat mantle assisted by Bruce Wayne's cynical and brattish son as Robin.



### Batman Incorporated

Grant Morrison, Chris Burnham et al

Here, the Bat-franchise is launched with multiple Batmen at work across the world. Animated series *Batman: The Brave And The Bold* was a major influence on it.



### New X-Men

Grant Morrison, Frank Quitely et al

In his short stint at Marvel, this 40-issue series introduced many changes to the X-Men canon that still stand today, most notable creating the super-intelligent punk-ass character, Quentin Quire.



From the makers of SciFiNow

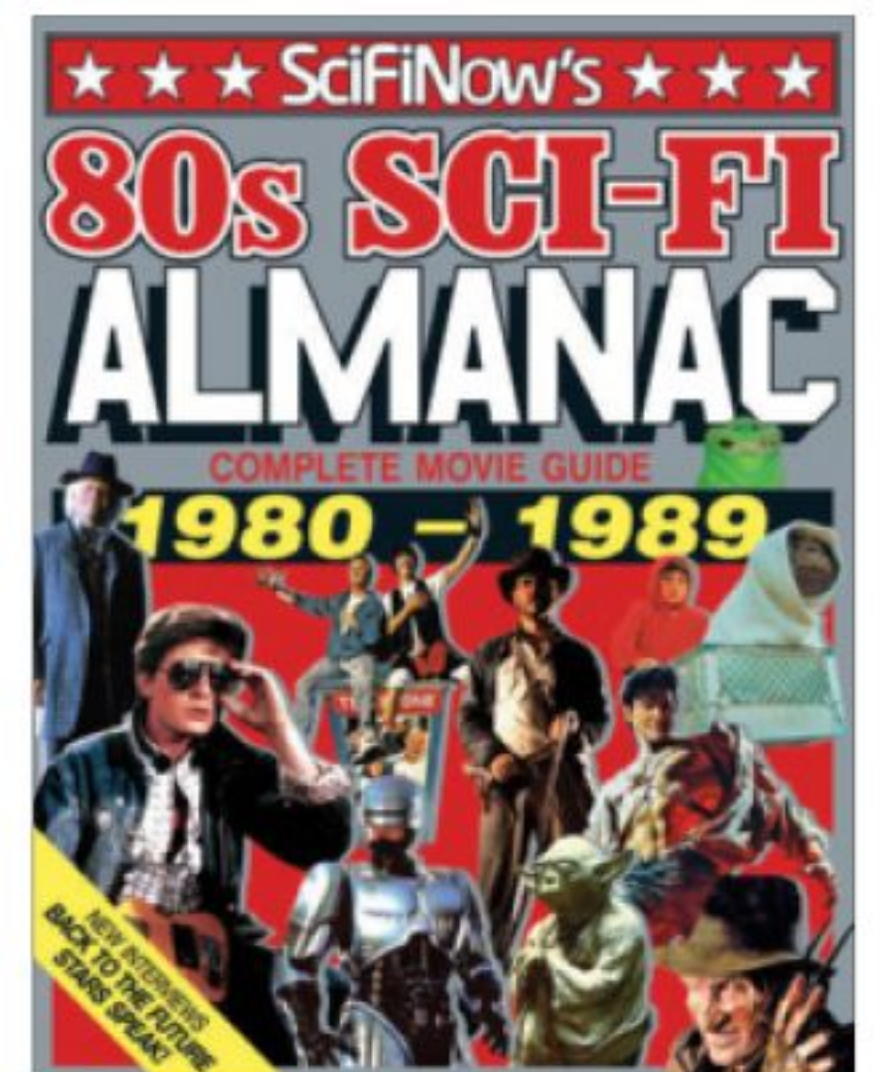
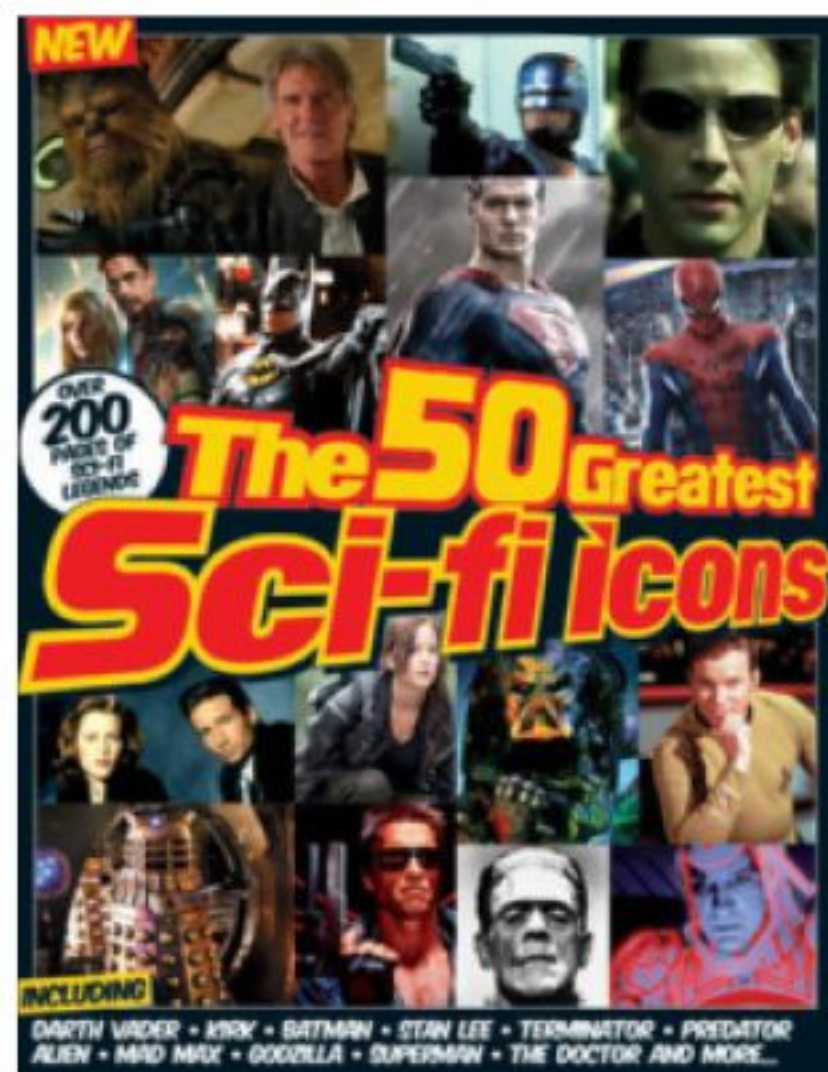


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# THE COMPLETE GUIDE TO X-MEN THE ANIMATED SERIES

FOR MANY OF US, IT'S STILL THE DEFINITIVE ADAPTATION OF THE X-MEN, AND IT REMAINS ONE OF THE BEST SUPERHERO CARTOONS EVER MADE. JOIN US AS WE TALK TO THE CREATORS AND CAST OF X-MEN: THE SERIES TO FIND OUT HOW THIS 90S ANIMATION CHANGED SUPERHERO TV FOREVER

WORDS JONATHAN HATFULL INTERVIEWS JONATHAN HATFULL, STEVE WRIGHT

**Back in 2014, all you'd hear about Bryan Singer's *X-Men: Days Of Future Past* was that it would never work. It would have too many characters, and the time-travel structure would be too complex. People would have done well to remember the lessons taught back in 1991, as the *X-Men* animated series masterfully tackled Chris Claremont and John Byrne's time-bending storyline. Complexity isn't new for the *X-Men*, and Singer learned from the best.**

"The greatest quote I've heard about this show came from Bryan Singer," remembers the show's executive director, Sidney Iwanter. "When he was preparing the first *X-Men* movie, he got all 76 of the episodes, and he watched them. He didn't read the comic-books; he watched those episodes." A smart choice, because no adaptation of the characters created by Stan Lee and Jack Kirby has ever come close to matching the show developed by Iwanter, Eric Lewald and Mark Edens. From 1992 to 1997, the *X-Men* animated series defined the stories and characters for a whole generation of fans. It's not just Singer who holds up the show to the highest standard; we all do.

Back in the early Nineties, however, it looked as though no one was interested in bringing the X-Men to TV. Following a dire pilot attempt by the name of *Pryde Of The X-Men* (in which the Australian Wolverine is a weird bit of foreshadowing, but a good example of the kind of creative mistakes being made), Margaret Loesch was desperate for a second crack at Marvel's mutants and, despite finding it hard to convince others of their merit, she wasn't going to give up.

"She made the show happen," explains Lewald. "As an animation producer, she had pitched the show for years and received no interest from the three American TV networks (ABC, CBS, NBC). When she became head of the new, smaller Fox network's children's division, she made it a priority. She made it happen, and Sidney Iwanter, her right-hand man, ran it."

While *Pryde Of The X-Men* was a failure, it proved to be useful in that it gave the production team an example of what not to do. "I used to say that everything they did on *Pryde Of The X-Men*, we were going to do 180 degrees differently," remembers Iwanter. "It was Marvel's first attempt at doing something involving the X-Men, but unfortunately there were extenuating circumstances. I still don't know why Kitty Pryde was part of this thing other than that it was a play on words! And you can see this pilot on YouTube – it's just a mangle! I look at it and I just laugh at it!"

However, the production soon ran into hurdles of its own. There were the rights, of course, and Marvel has never been known for being creatively hands-off. "Initially, there were several restrictions," Iwanter explains. "There were financial restrictions obviously; we had to get together a team that could afford to do this. We had to get the rights from Marvel. At that time, Marvel was beginning to go through all sorts of bankruptcy problems – it was chaos. You had the difficulty of trying to explain to the comic-book writers the difference between writing an animated episode and writing a comic-book – there were arguments about that. There's a massive difference between the storytelling techniques of television versus comic ➤



The rich cast of characters included iconic villains like Juggernaut.



The first episode arc, 'The Night Of The Sentinels', introduced us to Jubilee and the X-Men.





### "BRYAN SINGER DIDN'T READ THE COMICS; HE WATCHED THESE EPISODES"

SIDNEY IWANTER

books. Things that you wouldn't even think about today, because there are so many cartoon shows based on Marvel characters. We weren't so much breaking the mould; we were creating the mould. So yeah, there were difficulties."

Once the project was a-go, things moved quickly. We're used to animated series taking years to develop, but the *X-Men* team needed to put their show together in a matter of months, a process that Lewald describes as "super-fast, underfunded and chaotic – like a garage band."

"The show was green-lit in mid-February 1992 with the intention of getting it on the air in mid-September," he continues. "Mark Edens and I had to craft a short series bible and the story arc for the first 13 episodes in two weeks and have the two-part, 85-page pilot script done two weeks later. As a contrast, our sister Fox animated show *Batman* had been in development for nearly a year prior to that."

Their work shows no sign of being short on time, however. One of the series' biggest strengths is apparent from the outset: the line-up. The core ensemble of the show is an excellent blend of personalities and powers, with Professor X's team made up of Cyclops, Jean Grey, Wolverine, Storm, Gambit, Rogue and Beast, joined by runaway teen Jubilee.

"We chose for diversity, uniqueness of voice: very different characters who complemented each other," adds Lewald. "A room of eight gruff, angry rebels makes for a dull story. Some characters moved up and others moved down as we wrote the first 13 episodes. As Mark and I built the first season story arc, we quickly discovered that certain characters were crucial to the

storytelling. Professor Xavier gave life and a philosophic basis to the team. Jean held the group together emotionally, and we loved writing for Beast. That gave us nine leads – quite crowded for 22-minute stories. There wasn't room for more, except as guest stars."

"I wanted icons," Iwanter explains. "If you look at the X-Men, they're all iconic, but they're all genre iconic. Jubilee was the most interesting one, because she was a character who had just begun in the comic-books, so she was there as a representative of the audience. She was seeing this stuff for the first time; they were going to see this wonderment of being an X-Man through her eyes, and her fears."

With the team decided on, the next challenge was casting, and finding actors who understood the material and the approach would be surprisingly difficult, as the first round of auditions revealed. "We were shocked," remembers Iwanter. "We listened to the cassettes and they sucked. We had busted our asses to make a well-conceived two parter, 'The Night Of The Sentinels', which would open everything up. The voices were so god-awful, so generic, so without texture, tone and gravitas that I think that was my first mini stroke on the show. My head exploded, I went to Margaret and said, 'Margaret, this is garbage, it's so generic. The people who were sent up to Toronto to record this show, did they read the script?'"



**The problem, as Iwanter saw it**, was that everyone seemed to have a preconception of what the show was going to be. A Saturday morning cartoon based on a comic came with certain expectations. What *X-Men* was aiming for was something much more serious. "They could have just as easily been doing *Thomas The Tank Engine*; there was nothing there," he tells us. "We fired everybody. We threw out those two cassettes – I think they were burned, buried in a lead case and thrown into the ocean – so what we did basically is recast, we created the sound that is present now in the series."

"I went in, they sat me down and gave me the script, and the director said to me 'Wolverine's kind of a cross between Ward Bond, Steve McQueen and Clint

Eastwood,'" laughs Cathal J Dodd, the man whose gravelly tones made the animated Wolverine an icon. "So I just put all those things together and added a bit of my own Wolfman Jack thing. They showed me a picture of him and they tried to explain, as fast as they could, who he was and what he was, and I just flew with it. The audition dialogue was he's talking to someone who's been picking on someone else, and he says [in the classic Wolverine voice] 'You like picking on people smaller than you? I got an idea pal, I'm smaller than you, pick on me!' Everyone in the control room just got up out of their chairs and shook hands! It just got better with each take. They were spending so much time with each character to make sure they got the voices properly the way they wanted them – they spent a day with me."

That kind of perfectionism was indicative of the brutally hard work and dedication of the team. They were determined that the show would tackle the same issues as the comic; issues like acceptance, bigotry, prejudice, fear and family, with the same level of maturity and intelligence. "Almost everything we did on this show was unlike anything that had been done before on Saturday morning," enthuses Iwanter. "If you had done this show in the Eighties it would have been X-Men vs X-Men. They would have been battling each



Gambit – then a relatively new comic creation – was part of the main roster.

## TOP 10 X-MEN EPISODES Ranking the best instalments in



### 1. THE NIGHT OF THE SENTINELS

The two-part series opener introduces us to the world of the X-Men through the eyes of Jubilee, acting as a brilliant welcome to the team and the threats they face. It's amazing how quickly it's all established.



### 2. DAYS OF FUTURE PAST

Bishop tumbles back through time to stop an assassin from killing Senator Kelly, but who is the hitman? It's superbly done and an incredibly ambitious first season two-parter, and shows how confident they were.



### 3. TIL DEATH DO US PART

*X-Men* shocked everyone when they killed a mutant in their first episode. This chilling two-parter brings him back, as a brainwashed Morph does the bidding of Mister Sinister and runs amok at the mansion.



### 4. REPO MAN

Wolverine gets some back story as he runs across Vindicator and Alpha Flight. Turns out someone's desperate to get the secrets of his adamantium skeleton. It's a great mostly solo outing for Logan, which fills in some history and some motivation.



### 5. TIME FUGITIVES

Bishop is back for more time travel antics with the even-more-tricky-than-'Days Of Future Past' two-parter, as he's followed through time by Cable, who must stop him from stopping Apocalypse to stop a deadly plague.

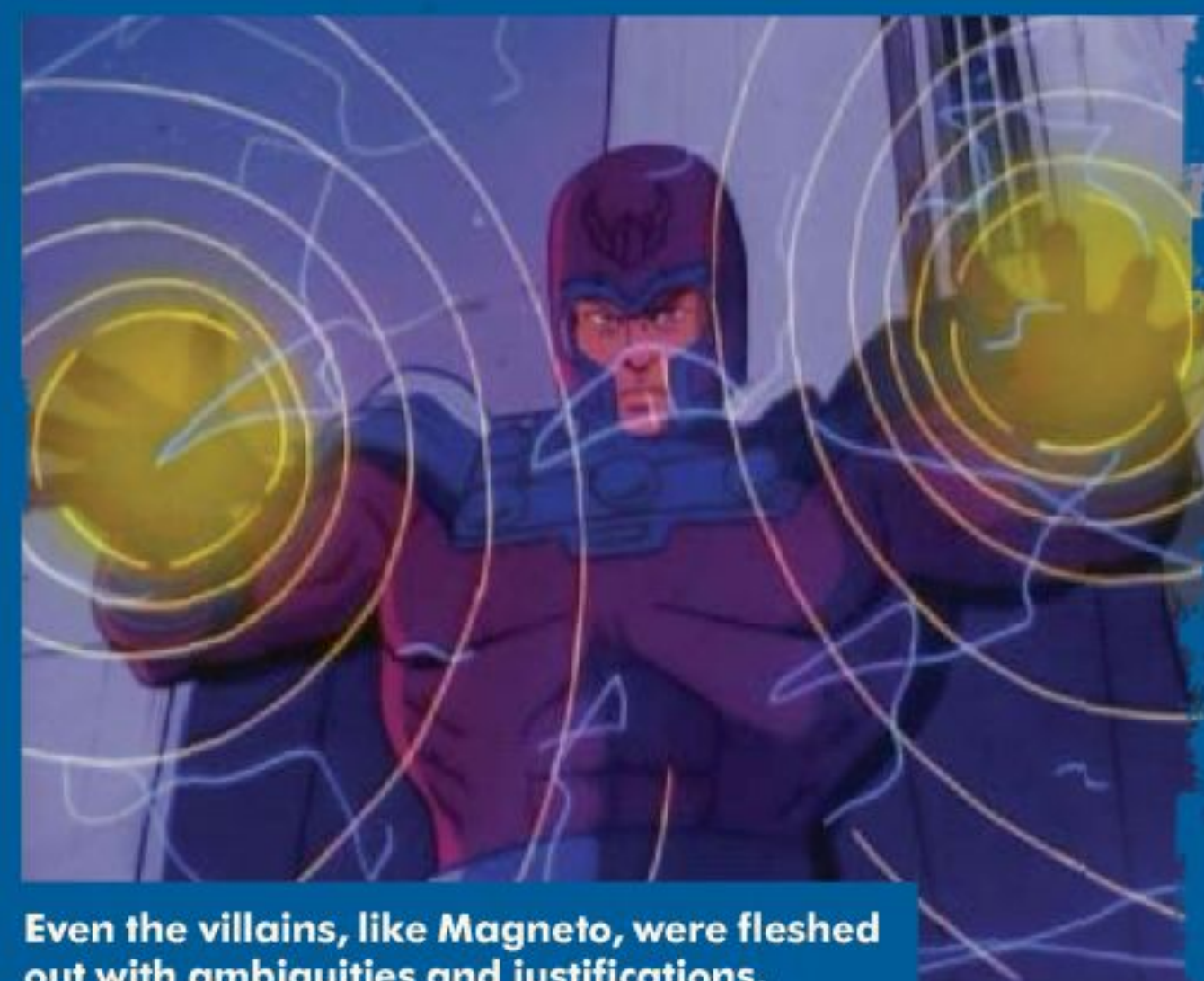


# X-MEN

## ANIMATED SERIES COMPLETE GUIDE



Many of the characters went on to be included in the live-action film adaptations.



Even the villains, like Magneto, were fleshed out with ambiguities and justifications.

## the animated series



### 6. THE PHOENIX SAGA

Technically cheating because this spans seven episodes, but this is the show at its finest, introducing alien threats and sending Jean Grey to the edge. It's not just huge in scope; it's genuinely moving.



### 7. COLD COMFORT

The show gave us a look at a time before Jubilee's arrival with this excellent episode focusing on Bobby 'Iceman' Drake. We get to see someone else rile Cyclops, and how a X-Man could decide to leave the mansion and the team.



### 8. NIGHTCRAWLER

Wolverine tended to do best when it came to the psychological exploration, and this sweet one-hander confronted him with his loss of faith, while giving our favourite teleporter a great classic monster-movie story in a German monastery.



### 9. SANCTUARY

Magneto was never just treated as a one-dimensional villain, and in 'Sanctuary' we get to see his efforts to find a new home for his fellow mutants. Naturally, it doesn't work out, as he's double crossed by Fabian Cortez.



### 10. GRADUATION DAY

The finale saw Xavier on the brink of death thanks to Henry Gyrich. The mutants tell Magneto, who calls off his plan to destroy mankind, and they all gather to bid him farewell. It's a touching end to a brilliant show.



➤ other. GI Joe vs Cobra, and that's it. But the whole point of the X-Men was that you had superhero characters battling other superhero villains for human civilisation – a civilisation that feared them, hated them, and wanted to have nothing to do with them. That's something we really knew had to be emphasised. It's not just villains; it's to help mankind and humanity, whether they want it or not. And that's what made that show so very important; because it added a human dimension that you don't see in shows now. Imagine being a superhero and everybody hates you! But you still have to do your job, and that's what the X-Men are all about."

The series began with 'The Night Of The Sentinels', a two parter that introduces Jubilee, and the audience, to the world of the X-Men. The giant mutant-herding robots not only introduced the themes of oppression and government surveillance, but also allowed the creators to provide something for our heroes to actually fight, and the audiences lapped it up.

"Oh man, after the first two or three episodes on TV, when I actually watched it, I was so blown away," remembers Dodd. "I thought 'Wow, this is so good.' This is not just a cartoon. Then kids were writing in the mail, the post they received was unheard of! So we did all sorts of contests, I would phone some poor kid in Dallas, Texas or something and wake him up at 7:30, because he'd won a contest to talk to Wolverine. There were hundreds of these things all over the States. These kids were going apeshit."



"My favourites were the originals," remembers Iwanter. "Even though I think we did a very good job with the *Phoenix*, *Dark Phoenix* and *Days Of Future Past*, I found it gave us much more flexibility. Because again, whether it was *Phoenix* or any of the other comic book-based sagas, we still had to change them because of Saturday morning conventions. We weren't going to blow up planets full of people; we weren't Galactus. It just became much easier to do original episodes, I don't think we embarrassed ourselves by what we did with the stories based on the comics."

Indeed, the direct adaptations are some of the show's finest hours, and showcased just what the team was capable of. *The Phoenix Saga* was handled beautifully in Season Three, charting the story of Jean Grey's possession by the Phoenix force and her turn to villainy, and remains the high point of the series in the eyes of many fans. However, as Iwanter points out, each of the characters got their own journeys. "I love that we explored everyone's psyche," enthuses Dodd. The love affair between Gambit and Rogue, the fact that she can't kiss anyone without killing them, I loved the episode with Wolverine and Yuriko, and the fact that he was in love with Jean Grey and jealous of Cyclops. And his love and protection of Jubilee. As tough as he is, he is so vulnerable and so full of heart. He was always defending the underdog; that is huge for him. That kind of sums up his whole character: the defender of the downtrodden."

Based around this character development were incredibly complex storylines, like the time-travelling 'Time Fugitives' two-parter, or 'Sanctuary', in which Magneto attempts to establish his own mutant colony, or indeed, any of the multi-part storylines. Characters were being treated properly, the plotlines were hugely



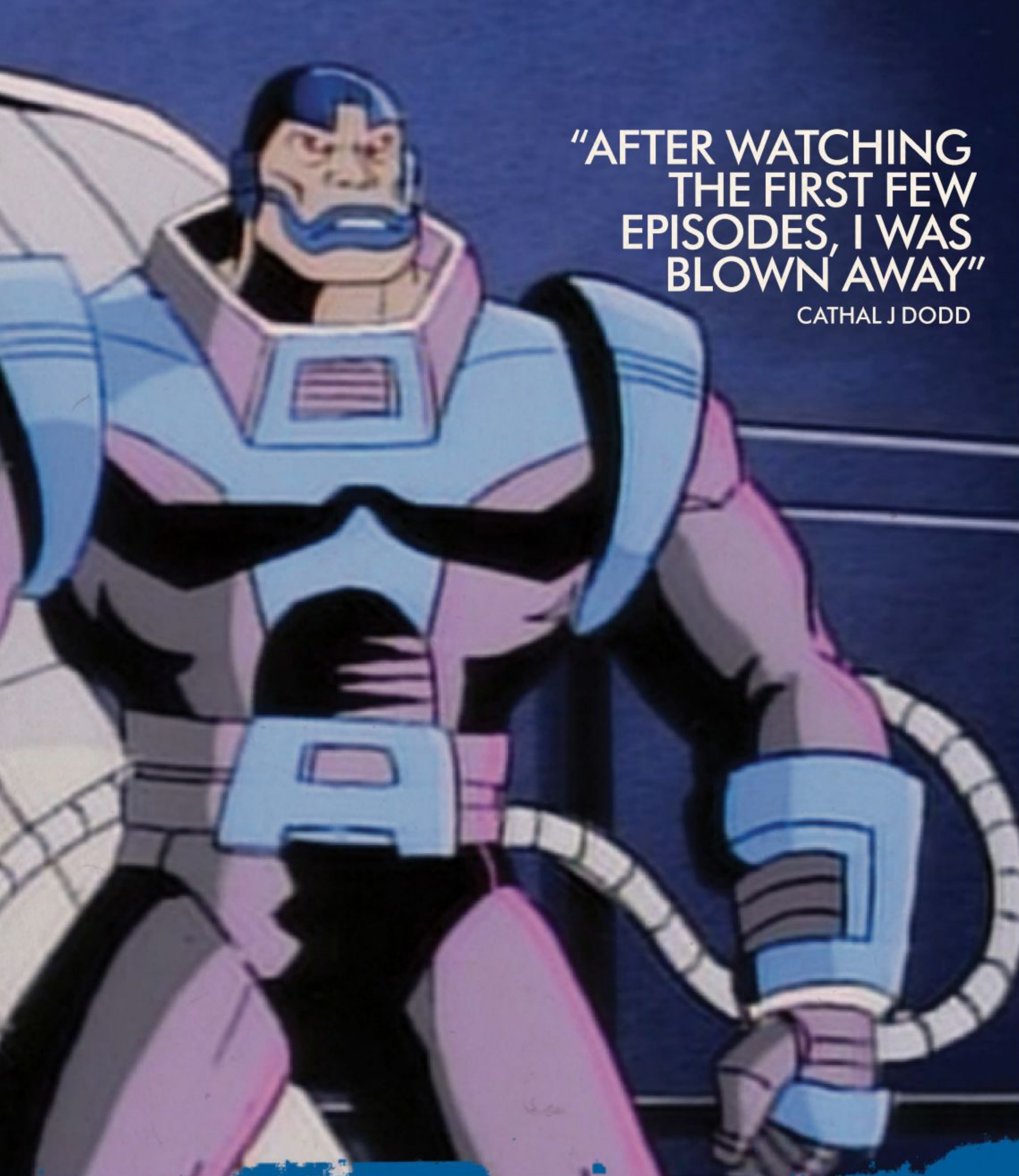
Beast and Wolverine's chalk-and-cheese dynamic was one of the series' highlights.



Jubilee – the team's youngest member – acted as a gateway for the audience to view the show.







"AFTER WATCHING  
THE FIRST FEW  
EPISODES, I WAS  
BLOWN AWAY"

CATHAL J DODD

## ANIMATED SERIES COMPLETE GUIDE



### CUE THE FIREWORKS!

We talk to the voice of Jubilee,  
Alyson Court, about her legacy

#### How did you get the part of Jubilee?

Sidney Iwanter knew me from having to listen to me as Lydia Deetz [on *Beetlejuice*], but I didn't know him. He actually didn't want me on the show because he was so sick of listening to my voice as Lydia! Then I got the call: "Hey would you be able to go in tomorrow to record this? It's not working out with the other actress." I went in, and Sidney was just like, "Urgh, fine! But if she sounds like Lydia, it's not happening!" And every time I recorded a line, he'd be like "No, it sounds like Lydia, do it again!" And he was the one who was like, "Don't think of this as your typical Saturday morning cartoon! I don't want to hear some flakey little 12-year-old-sounding cartoon girl. This isn't goofy pre-teen stuff, this is a serious cartoon... think of it like a serious film!"

#### What were your first impressions of Jubilee?

I thought she was a brat who just liked to kind of talk and mouth off and be sassy and give attitude. It wasn't until Sidney started to really rake me over the coals about how that's just under the surface; you need to understand what's going on here. You can be cocky about going to the mall, but there are these Sentinels who are government-issued who are trying to kill you. The bravado that you might hear from Jubilee is to cover the fact that she is a terrified little girl. It's essential that that is what comes through, because we are introducing the world to the plight of the mutants through Jubilee's eyes at the beginning, and it's essential that that the brattiness is just to establish that she is a real person; she's got different personality traits, but at the end of the day if we don't feel her vulnerability and really feel terrified for her, then people aren't going to buy into the world. So yeah, no pressure!

#### What's it like to see how popular it still is?

I'm really glad, having been there to see the passion of the people who made it happen, how much this property meant to them, and seeing the fights that would go on in the studio! And people weren't being jerks. Every single person who was fighting to be heard, all of the producers and directors and writers, it's because they really cared and they were so passionate and just really intent on doing justice to the X-Men world.

Professor X and Magneto's friendship/rivalry  
was often at the core of the show's conflicts.







## COMPLETE GUIDE TO X-MEN: THE ANIMATED SERIES

➤ ambitious, and audiences were loving it. However, as popular as the series was, and as high as the quality remained, there were problems behind the scenes. “During the first two seasons, the writers and artists (and Sidney at Fox) and I had fought to be allowed to do stories in some kind of arc or order – not at all what was usually allowed,” Lewald tells us. “Various production issues and delays in those two seasons forced Fox to finally say no more season-arcs. We tried to get around that with multi-part episodes. But the truth was once the third season began, care for broadcast order was thrown out the window, to the detriment of the series.”

“We had no idea from one day to the next what the shows were going to look like,” continues Iwanter. “We spent a lot of time in post-production fixing those shows. Some of the stuff that came back looked like I drew it, and I can’t draw a straight line with a ruler. It’s not like live action; these shows take anywhere from 4-6 months overseas, and when the first cut comes back and it looks like somebody stomped on it with an ugly stick, you can’t do it, you send it back, and hopefully the next time the show is better. If it’s not, you send it back for more retakes. But there were also nights where we’d be up literally all night fixing these shows

in post-production and editing, splicing and throwing out frames or sequences because they were unusable, and find ways of still keeping to that 22 minutes and 30 seconds format. A lot of the magic happened in post.”

Eventually, after five seasons, Fox put a stop to the show. “I think we could have made more,” Iwanter tells us. “The problem was there were politics at Fox at the time, and we were having a lot of problems with our suppliers in the Far East. We were getting back this garbage animation. I suspect after 76 half hours we’d told everything we really needed to tell.”

What’s left is a hugely impressive legacy. While there are legions of fans who remember the series very fondly, what really impresses is how the series holds up today. It took chances, it did break the mould for traditional Saturday morning animation, and it never talked down to its audiences. “We were breaking every rule possible – and we succeeded,” Iwanter enthuses. “We were doing continuing storylines, and I said ‘Wait, if adults can understand the ‘Previously On’, you’re not reading Dante here; these are shows. With careful editing, you get the highlights of the previous week, and you’re ready to rock and roll!’ If we had failed, people would have turned around and said, ‘I told you so. I told you those kids couldn’t understand the

storylines, and that from week to week you can’t tell epic, multi-dimensional sagas.’ But everything they told us we couldn’t do, because the audiences wasn’t smart enough to understand or it hadn’t been done before, we blew that shit away. We proved them wrong.”

“To this day I’ve worn the Wolverine jacket to the liquor store, and the kids there just freak out,” laughs Dodd. “I can’t believe it, this was my Saturday morning, every Saturday morning, I never missed it for five years, here you are buying beer from me!’ I say ‘Yeah, well, hurry up, punk!’ That makes his day. I’ve worked with guys who say ‘I can’t believe it; I’m meeting fucking Wolverine!’ They still talk about it, they want it back. That’s astounding. You just don’t believe anything’s going to be that big! I just fell in love with [Wolverine], and it was just a fantastic five years. I missed him so much when it was over.”

“There are these benchmark shows that kids remember, that seem to transcend time for them,” concludes Iwanter. “I remember growing up in the Fifties, and loving the Disney adventures. I remember these things, and they’re 50-60 years old... there are very few of these kind of shows out there. I think this show, and maybe *Batman: The Animated Series*, transcends time.”





# X-MEN: THE ANIMATED SERIES

## COMPLETE GUIDE



X-Men was creative in how it got around the various censorship laws of the time.

**"WE WERE  
BREAKING EVERY  
RULE POSSIBLE  
—AND WE  
SUCCEEDED"**

SIDNEY IWANTER



The 'Phoenix' saga episodes were some of the show's highlights.



To this day, Wolverine voice actor Cathal J Dodd misses working on the show.



## NO MUTANTS WERE HARMED IN THE MAKING OF THIS SHOW

**The X-Men battled not only Sentinels, but also the censors**

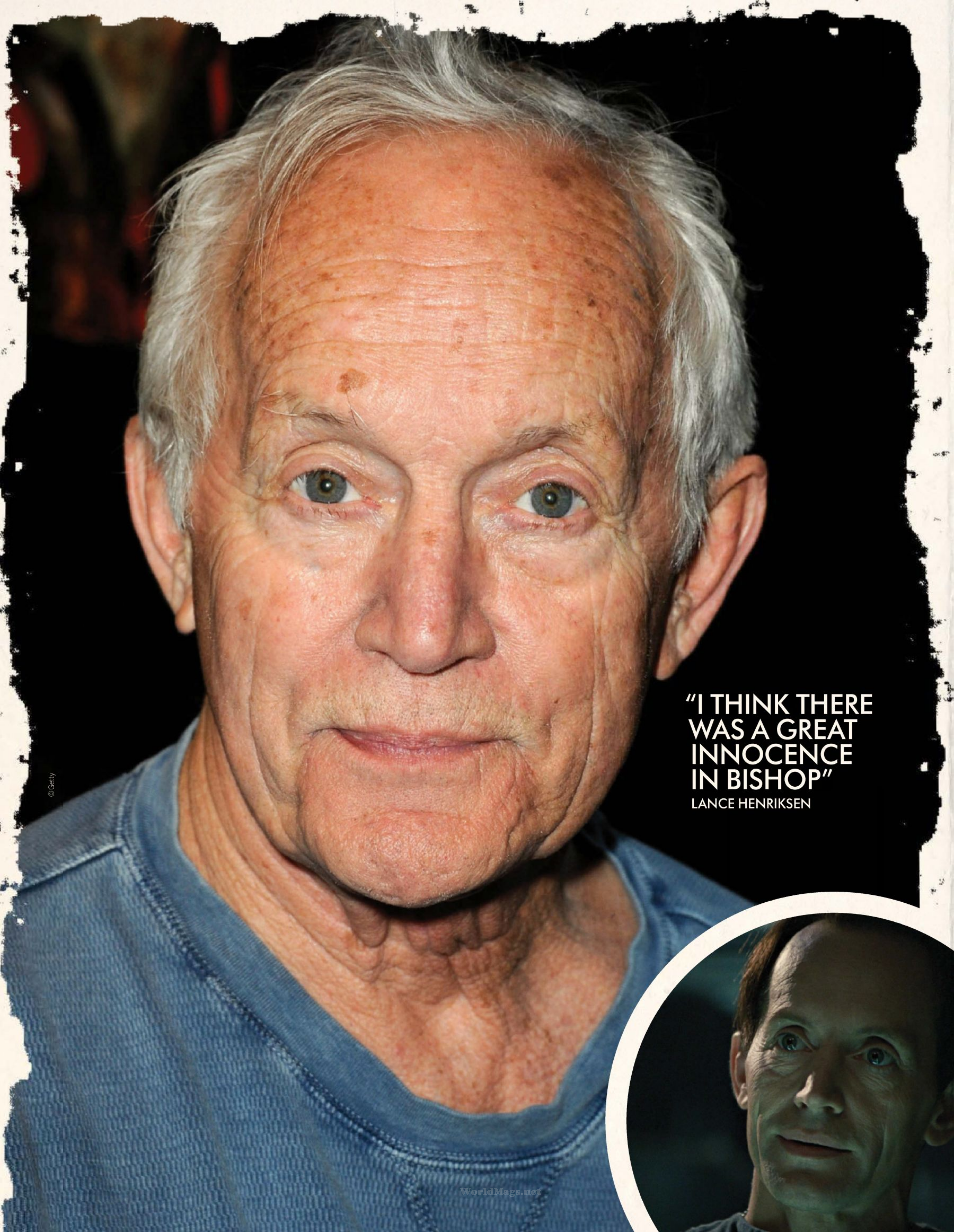
The animated series is known for many things. High-quality, awesome theme music, mad time-travel stories — not to mention how it got around the censors, finding ways to show how bad-ass the characters were without crossing any lines.

"The philosophy behind Saturday morning cartoons that these kids, monsters or whatever wouldn't do anything that was replicable," explains Sidney Iwanter. "So you wouldn't see anybody hitting anyone over the head, for example. And this goes back to something that happened in a *Scooby Doo* episode, of all things. He's in a bathroom, goes to the medicine cabinet, and looks at a bunch of pills, swallows one or two. You can't do that, as we discovered, because it's replicable. These were the laws, and I never had a problem with that. Some of them were pretty stupid, but I understood the reasoning behind them."

While mutant powers may not have been immediately replicable, it was the violence that would prove to be an issue. "In 1992 there were very strict Broadcast Standards and Practices guidelines at all US networks, and they were far stricter for children's programming," remembers Eric Lewald. "We pushed the limits as far as they could go, and were aided by a thoughtful BS&P executive named Avery Cobern. Normal for the time was: no killing, no blood, no use of the word 'death', no blows to the head, no hero displaying vengeance or a desire to harm someone, no serious injuries, no severe suffering, no riding a motorcycle without a helmet (sorry, Logan), no endangering a character under 12 years of age, no sexuality, etc. We weren't even supposed to show Wolverine scratch anyone. So as you might imagine, there were lots of discussions."

The solution was ingenious: using one of the comics' deadliest threats, and one which Wolverine could drive his adamantium claws through without upsetting the parents. "This was a primary reason we featured the Sentinels as villains," admits Lewald. "Something non-human we could destroy with great spectacle." Snikt.





"I THINK THERE  
WAS A GREAT  
INNOCENCE  
IN BISHOP"

LANCE HENRIKSEN







INTERVIEW

# LANCE HENRIKSEN: ICON OF CINEMA

A PROLIFIC CHARACTER ACTOR, LANCE HENRIKSEN HAS CLOCKED UP OVER 200 CREDITS DURING HIS 45 YEARS ON SCREEN. WHETHER IT'S PLAYING ICONIC ANDROID BISHOP IN *ALIENS*, A NOMADIC VAMPIRE IN *NEAR DARK* OR CRIMINAL PROFILER FRANK BLACK ON HIT TV SERIES *MILLENNIUM*, HENRIKSEN'S ENTHUSIASM HAS NEVER WAVERED. WE TALK TO THE DISTINCTIVE, GRAVELLY VOICED ACTOR ABOUT SOME OF HIS MOST RECOGNISABLE GENRE ROLES...

WORDS OLIVER PFEIFFER

**You worked with James Cameron early on in his career, including his low-budget debut *Piranha 2: The Spawning*. What was he like during this time?**

We were down at Jamaica working for a fairly insane producer who thought \$300,000 was a mammoth budget, and there wasn't money for very much. What Jim has proved over the years is that every dollar that he has to spend on a movie is up on the screen, no matter how poverty-stricken that might have been. With *Piranha 2* he did the best he could with what he had, and that's what made me like him right off the back. We were sort of the same ilk. To me, the budget doesn't matter; I do the same work and try to do a good movie. But it was intensely impossible odds. I had to buy my wardrobe from a waiter: I gave him \$75 for his pants and his shirt! That's what I used throughout the entire movie.

**With *The Terminator* you were originally considered for the title role, as Cameron wrote the part with you in mind, didn't he?**

I fought that idea for a really long time. People would ask me that and I would say, "No, I was just doing my friend a favour." Literally I went [into the audition] and tried to scare them and give them a feel of what that character would be like if I did it. Then I left.

That was it. Years later, [producer] Gale Anne Hurd and I were recording a DVD commentary track, and I said I've been fighting that for years that Jim was going to give me the role of the Terminator, and she said "He was!" I thought, "Oh shit! It's the truth, and I didn't even know it." I had no idea!

**You would ultimately play Bishop in *Aliens*, who would also become a**

**very iconic android character. What's the key to playing a convincing android?**

I thought, "How am I going to live up to this?" You had Rutger Hauer and Ian Holm, who both did wonderful jobs, and I wanted to live up to something, so I thought, "You know what? I've got to forget all of that stuff." It wasn't going to help me at all. When I read the script I read a long list of what the issues with this character were and what he needs to do and be and what he's like around other people. Then I made a counter list: when have I been in these situations in my life?

I think there's a great innocence in Bishop. I was playing him in relation to my emotional life between the age of 12 and 14: it was a very optimistic, yet I was under the control of everything else. So I broke it down that way, and there was a feeling of, "I'm going to outlive everyone I'm talking to, and they're all alive and I'm not. Therefore I'm a self-aware creation." It just worked.

**You returned for a cameo in David Fincher's *Alien 3*, but you weren't that keen to reprise the role, were you?**

I love David Fincher and thought he was a brilliant young man, but I thought, "Why revisit something like that?" I did it once – it's enough! But [producer] Walter Hall called me and said, "Go to England, have a cup of tea and a doughnut, and come home. You're going to be playing Bishop 1 and 2." Fincher was so bright and I genuinely liked him. I just didn't want to revisit it. When I did *Millennium* and played Frank Black every week and every show for three years it felt like one long movie, so that was fine. I guess my first feeling was out of nerves. I didn't know what the value of what I was doing was. I certainly wasn't playing him the same as I was playing Bishop.

**You ultimately ended up playing Bishop's creator, Weyland, in *Aliens Vs Predator*...**

That was okay, because we came up with the idea that Bishop, later in the future, would be a homage to Weyland, because he made his billions in robotics, and that gave me the whole thing. I was happy to die in the movie too, because it was like the last hurrah, which was kind of cool.

**It would have been nice to see you play that character in *Prometheus*...**

I love Ridley Scott's work, but when I left the theatre after seeing *Prometheus* I felt nothing. I thought it was beautiful, but I didn't connect with anybody except the captain [Idris Elba's character] and Noomi Rapace.

**You say you wouldn't really like to play Bishop again because you've been there and done that, but what if you were to return in Neill Blomkamp's alternative sequel to *Aliens*?**

I have a lot of respect for Neill; he does great work and there's no doubt that he's a moviemaker. Everything would certainly depend on his point of view. What is it? Why are we doing it? It's like saying, "What is heaven like? What is it gonna be? What is it?" I don't know! I won't know until I know. But I like his work and respect it enough to feel honored to be in the fucking movie again with him. He's a fresh moviemaker. When you see the work that he's done... holy shit, that guy's got guts! He's very fresh.

**Have you been contacted about reprising the role at all?**

No I haven't, but look at the excitement just with the idea of continuing *Aliens*! It's picking up right from where Jim's left off. Something has happened that I'm really happy about. Ridley did the first *Alien* and Jim ➤



➤ did the second, and I always thought that with Ridley being so competitive that it would be like ruling banjos: you'd have Ridley doing one, then Jim, then Ridley, then Jim again. I imagined that right after we finished *Aliens*.

**With *The X-Files* returning for a new series, would you like to see the return of Frank Black in *Millennium* too?**

I would, actually. I think it's timely. Chris Carter and I have spoken about this. I think, as do a lot of people, that it was before its time and that time has caught up. When you see what has been done since *Millennium*, I think now if we did it again we would have much more freedom than we did back then.

It's a different world now. A lot of the things that were involved in *Millennium* could be opened up far more than ever before, and yet [Chris] had a great set of writers, and he always kept the tone right. It was a very creative show.

**And there was talk of a *Millennium* movie as well...**

I know, but nothing is happening. It's a lot of everybody wanting it, but it takes the people at Fox to pull the trigger.

In a lot of ways there's a lot of wonderful shows on right now, and they're pretty damn good, but you need to back a film like *Millennium* and get behind it. Chris wants to do it...



Henriksen returned as both Bishop and his far more oppressive creator in *Alien 3*.

**Were you happy with the direction the original series took?**

We did 60 shows, so at times I wasn't always 100 per cent happy. Some of them were pretty miserable. In one episode I killed somebody who's my friend and who's been my friend throughout the entire show. I shot him with a .45, and that didn't make me feel very good!

**You felt the role consumed you?**

Absolutely. It became an obsession, and I was living a character that was so better educated and far more sophisticated than I am, so I had to live up to it. It wasn't an easy role, it really wasn't.

**Another notable film you were a part of was the vampire flick *Near Dark*, directed by Cameron's then wife Kathryn Bigelow. Why do you feel it acquired such a cult following?**

I really don't know, but we got rid of all the clichés. The one that stayed was bursting into flames, but garlic, crosses and fangs were never present. We were nocturnal nomads. When people make it a cult film, we're talking about millions of people making it a cult film. I'm just one person that was there, but it's a surprise to me too. I really love that movie.

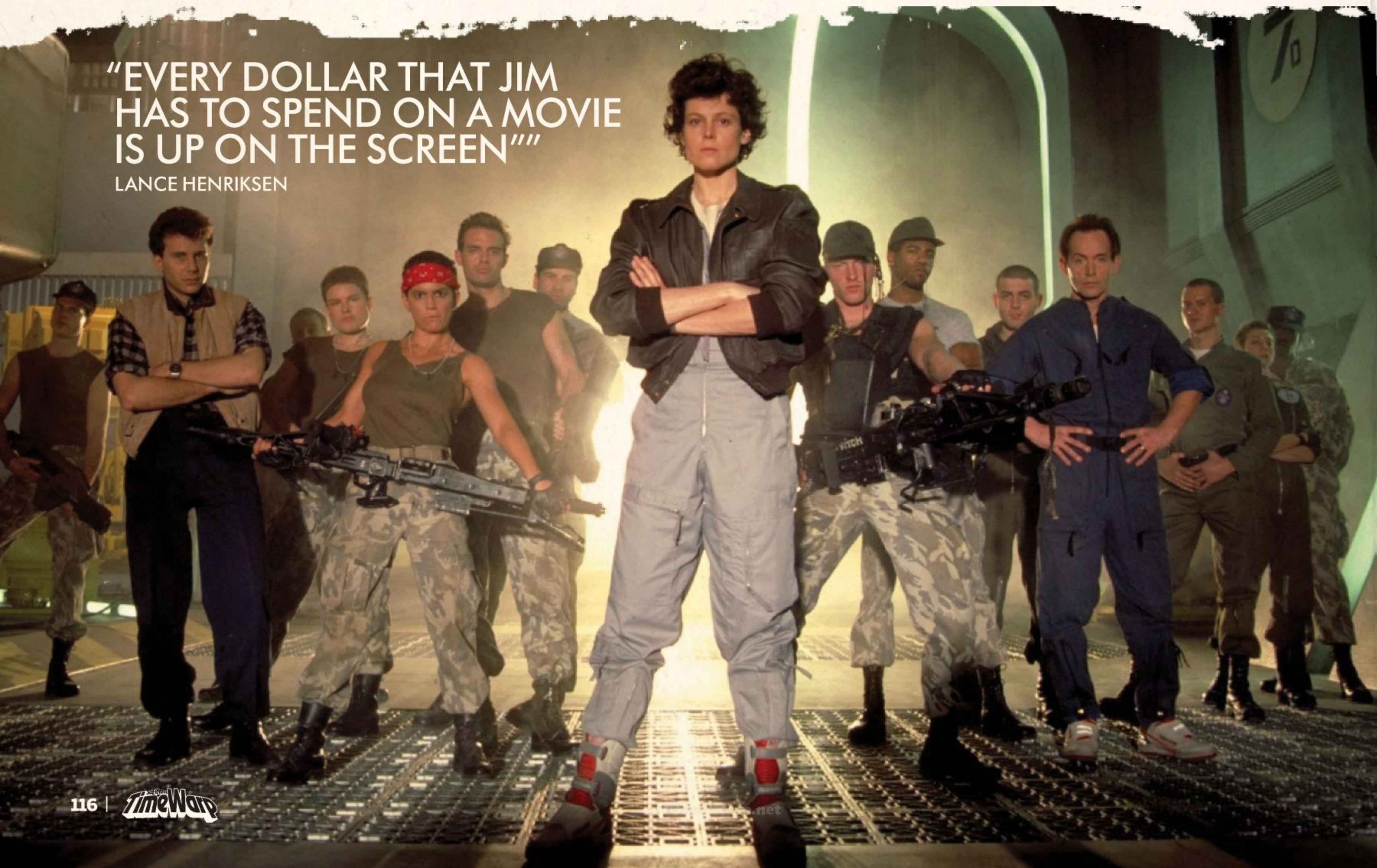
**There was talk of a prequel...**

When we finished the movie, Bill Paxton and I kept saying, "We gonna be starting a prequel right now on how this group of people got together?" However, the feeling was why would we want to make a movie about these vicious people – they're scary, vicious people. And I thought because they care about each other, that's why!

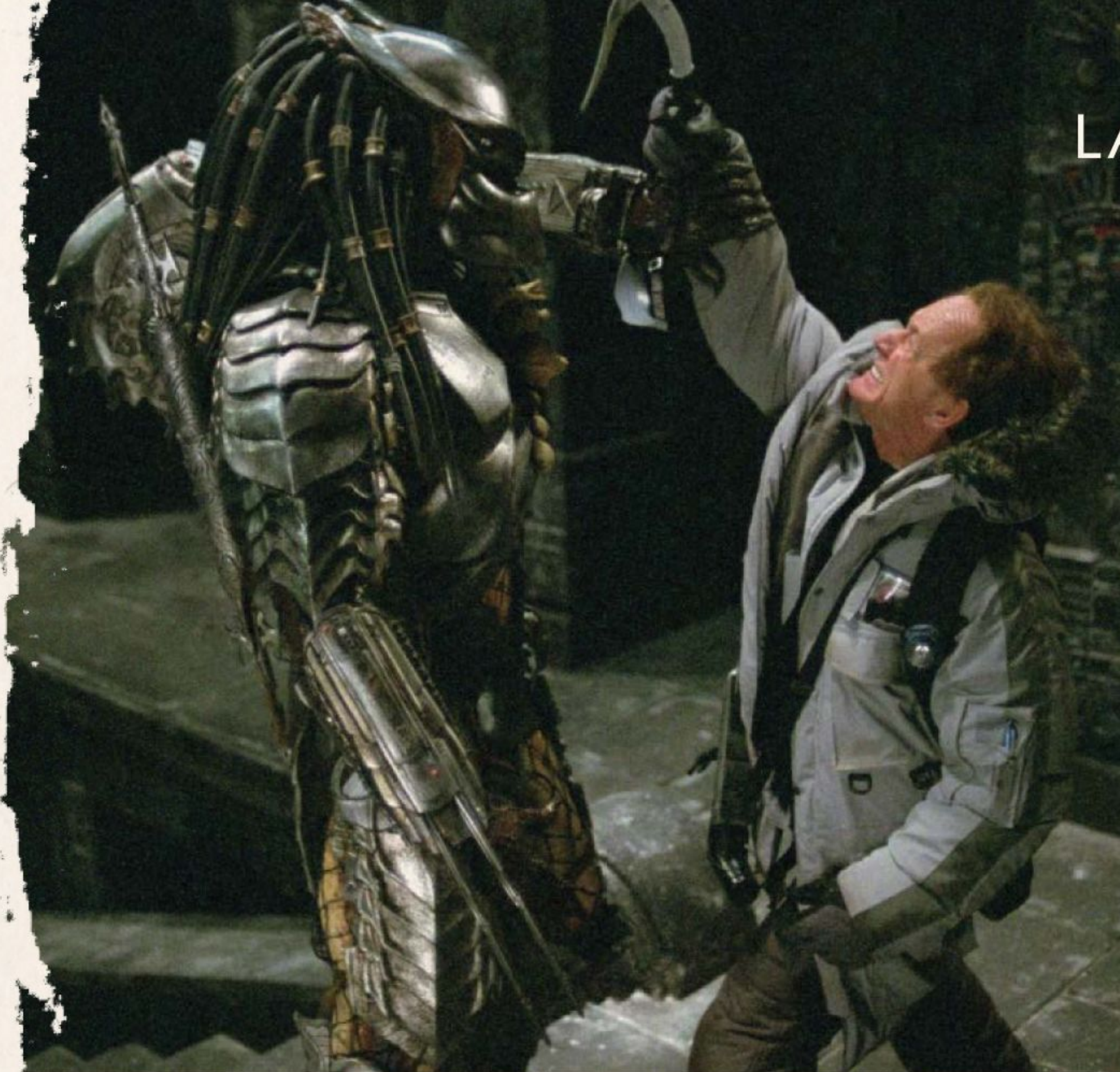
**You really prepared for the part, didn't you? You acquired fake nails and lost weight for the role too...**

"EVERY DOLLAR THAT JIM HAS TO SPEND ON A MOVIE IS UP ON THE SCREEN"

LANCE HENRIKSEN







Oh yeah, I got down to 140 pounds! I wanted all the bones in my chest to show. I actually put on acrylic nails and took a pair of pliers and snapped them off so that they were really jagged, like broken bones coming out of the tips of my fingers.

**You worked on an astonishing 17 movies in 2015. Do you ever take a break, and what keeps you going?**

When I walk onto a set it's an adventure. That's the whole point – that's what I love about it. I don't know what's going to happen. I don't know what this group is going to be like, and I'm ready for it and I really enjoy it. I really do.

**What's happening with the *Bring Me The Head Of Lance Henriksen* mockumentary?**

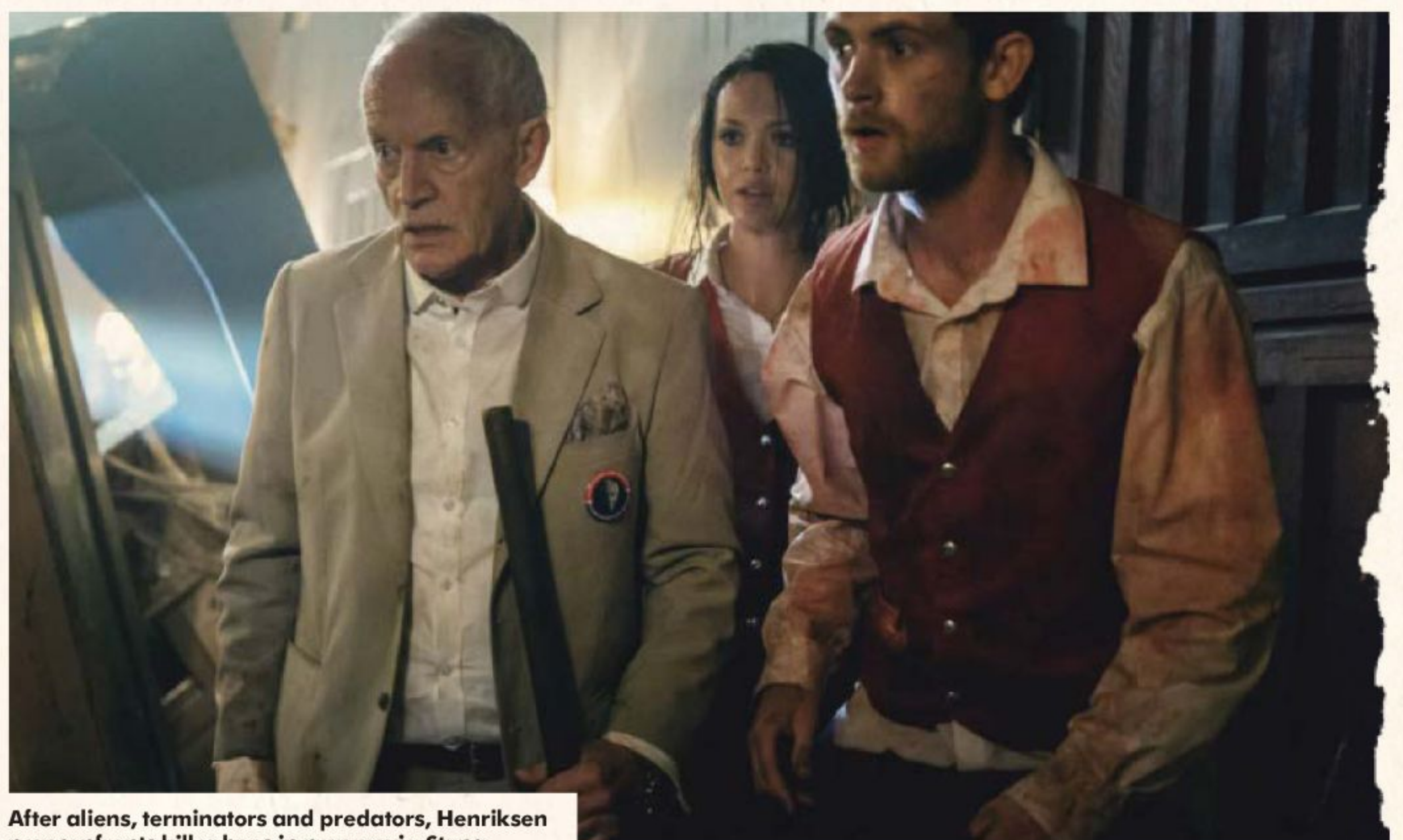
I haven't got a clue. We did the whole movie improvised. The premise was that every time actor Tim Thomerson goes for a job I either already have it or there's an offer out [to me for it]. It's driving him crazy, because we're about the same age! So he starts stalking me to try and figure out what I do to get all these jobs, and he can't even get arrested! And that's where the comedy comes in. I take him under my wing and I torture him! But I'm trying to wake him up, and it's a bit tortuous at times, and there's a lot of trying to get him to wake up.

**You also did a tongue-in-cheek killer bees film called *Stung* recently too...**

Yeah in Germany. That was really fun. I played an alcoholic mayor going to this big party to raise money to get re-elected. I have a feeling that I'm not going to get re-elected, so I decide to have a good time, and that's when the shit hits the fan! I enjoyed it very much because I've never done a comedy. I don't think I'm funny either – I just think situations are funny. I'd love to do more comedy, particularly with a director who knows how to do comedy, because they put you in situations that are funny. My sense of humour is very odd anyway.



Smoking may kill you, but the Terminator will do it quicker!



After aliens, terminators and predators, Henriksen now confronts killer bees in new movie *Stung*.

## HUNGRY FOR MORE HENRIKSEN?

CHECK OUT THE LEGENDARY CHARACTER ACTOR LIGHTING UP THE SCREEN IN THESE OTHER GENRE GEMS



**Close Encounters Of The Third Kind (1977)**

Eagle-eyed viewers may have already noticed Henriksen playing a technician during the unforgettable climax of Spielberg's classic sci-fi fantasy. If you didn't, time to rewatch!



**Damien: Omen II (1978)**

Henriksen plays the enigmatic but instrumental Sergeant Neff, who pivotally takes Devil's son Damien under his wing in this equally nihilistic sequel to Richard Donner's classic.



**Pumpkinhead (1988)**

An underrated cult classic horror film and the directorial debut of the late FX maestro Stan Winston. Henriksen is electric as the vengeful Ed Harley, who conjures up the notorious titular demon to wreck havoc on those who inadvertently killed his son.



**The Pit And The Pendulum (1991)**

The actor got to rub shoulders with infamous hellraiser Oliver Reed in Stuart Gordon's version of the classic Spanish Inquisition tale. His colourful recollections are brilliantly depicted in his 2011 autobiography, *Not Bad For A Human*.



**Scream 3 (2000)**

Henriksen played a B-Movie producer who has an intriguing history with Sidney's (Neve Campbell) late mother Maurine Prescott in Wes Craven's third instalment in the postmodern slasher series.



AUDREY II WAS THE MEAN, GREEN MUTHA FROM OUTER SPACE WITH A TASTE FOR HUMAN MEAT OVER PLANT FOOD, BUT WAS HE THE REAL VILLAIN OF SKID ROW? WAS HE REALLY WORSE THAN SEYMOUR KRELBORN, THE MAN WHO FED HIM? WE REVISIT LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS TO FIND OUT...

WORDS POPPY-JAY PALMER



# LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS



## Film

**RUNNING TIME:**

94 minutes

**RELEASE DATE:**

19 December 1986

**DIRECTOR:**

Frank Oz

**WRITER:** Howard Ashman

**CAST:** Rick Moranis,

Ellen Greene, Vincent

Gardenia, Steve Martin,

James Belushi, John Candy,

Christopher Guest, Bill

Murray, Levi Stubbs

## About

When a flower shop is struggling for customers, the business might have to fold. Things start to look up when employee Seymour comes across a strange new plant in an exotic shop across town. But he soon discovers the plant might not be all it seems, and the situation becomes more sinister: to make the plant grow, he needs to feed it human blood. It isn't long before the planet acquires a taste for human meat and Seymour finds himself doing things he never dreamed he'd do.

**Before watching *Little Shop Of Horrors*, there is something you should know: you're likely to finish the film with the realisation that it's possible for you to be attracted to a plant. You'll want to be friends with it. You'll want to hang out with it. Some of you will want to take it to bed. The point is that until Frank Oz's 1986 remake of *Little Shop Of Horrors*, a plant had never been so charismatic or so sensual.**

Audrey II will make you feel things. Whether those feelings are in your heart or your loins is your business, but unless you have weed killer in your veins, you'll feel something. It starts as an adorable little bud with heaps of personality and a thirst for blood, and grows into a giant sexy hunk of rock 'n' roll vegetation.

Many *Little Shop* converts find these feelings confusing for a number of reasons: 1) Audrey II is a plant; 2) he's literally a giant bud with teeth and creepy tentacle-like vines; 3) he doesn't even have eyes. How does he see? What are you supposed to gaze into on your first date?; 4) Is he even a boy plant? Maybe she's a girl plant. Most plants are monoecious anyway, so it's probably neither; and 5) It eats people.

Whether you spend nights dreaming of friendship or romance with Audrey II, the eating people part is a bit of a mood killer. Some people like that – there are many who'd like to fondue with Hannibal Lecter, despite that particular habit – but for most, it sets off alarm bells. So why is Audrey II so darn appealing? It could be down to The Four Tops' Levi Stubbs and his gravelly baritone vocals. It could be because of Lyle

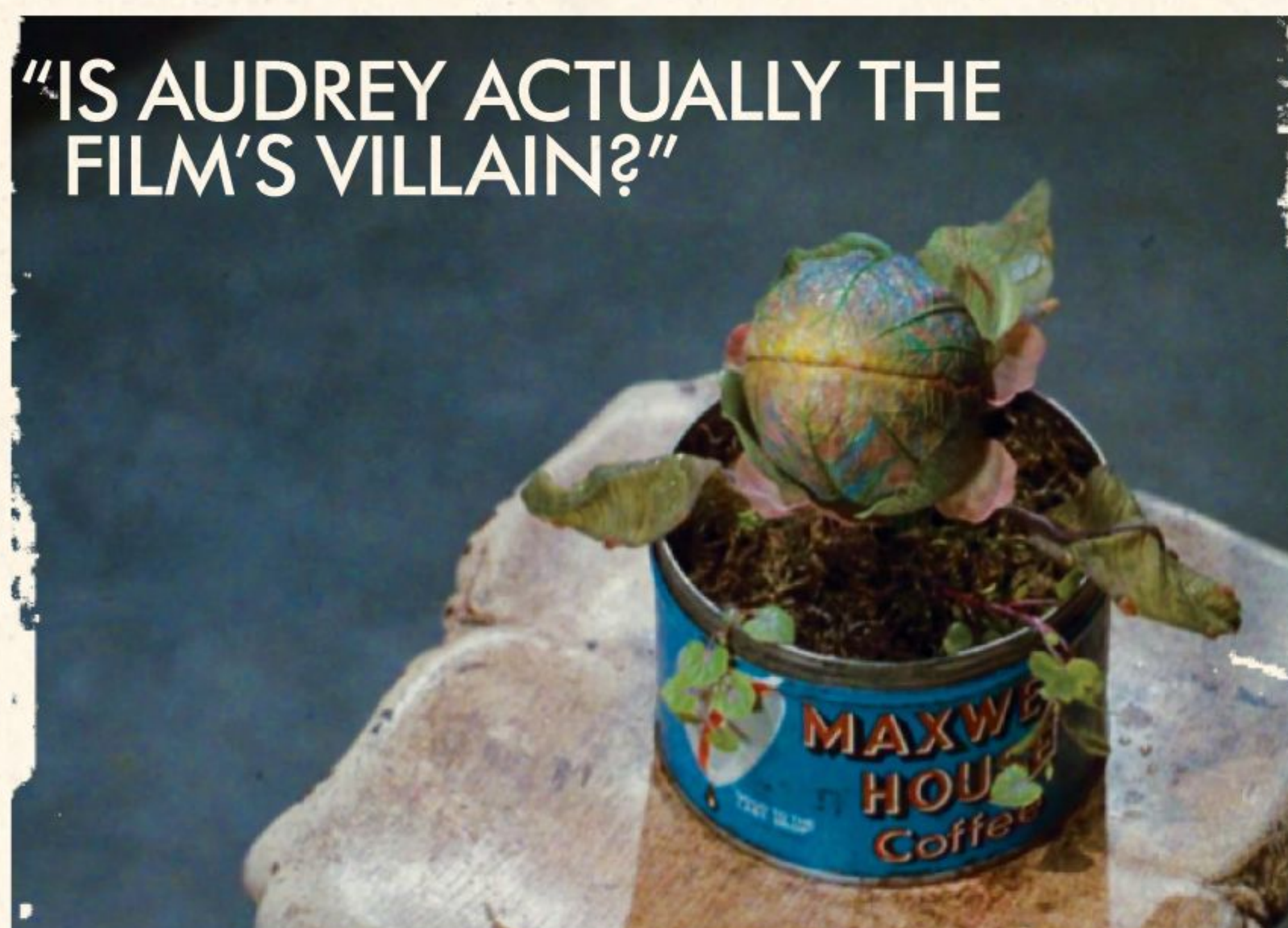
Conway's incredible puppet design. It's probably a mixture of the two. All we know is that it's a big green mutha from outer space, and it's baaaaad.

But as questionable as its activities are, is the plant actually the film's villain? We all love it, so surely it's not. Some would say Audrey II is the hero. It's just a bloodthirsty plant doing what it can to survive, like the rest of us. But who else is there to take on the main antagonist duties?

The most obvious contender is Orin Scivello, DDS (Steve Martin). First off, he's a dentist. Sorry dentists, but surely you must know by now that people don't like you very much. Though (hopefully) unlike most dentists, Orin's profession stems more from a deep love for hurting people than a deep love for oral hygiene.

Secondly – and likely most importantly – he's a terrible person. When he was young and just a bad little kid, his momma noticed funny things he did like shooting puppies with a BB gun – which he'd poison when he was done – and find a pussy cat and bash its head. That's when his momma said, "My boy, I think someday you'll find a way to make your natural tendencies pay: you'll be a dentist!" Terrible. And he just got even more sadistic as he got older. His characteristic torture of small animals developed into his torture of patients' mouths, which accumulated to slapping around his girlfriend Audrey (Ellen Greene) without a second thought. No matter what your stance on eating people is, hitting your partner is never okay.

The first time we meet Audrey at Mushnik's Flower Shop, she turns up to work both late and sporting a powerful black eye. Most of the film is a riot of laughs, but when Orin finally slaps Audrey ➡



"IS AUDREY ACTUALLY THE FILM'S VILLAIN?"



# LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS

RETRO CLASSIC



Seymour (Rick Moranis) and Audrey II (Ellen Greene) are each other's secret admirers.



Audrey II (Levi Stubbs) develops a taste for blood, and Seymour finds himself with a moral dilemma.



Orin (Steve Martin)'s love for causing pain makes him a perfect fit for dentistry.

## CLASSIC QUOTES

"DOES THIS LOOK INANIMATE TO YOU, PUNK? IF I CAN MOVE AND I CAN TALK, WHO'S TO SAY I CAN'T DO ANYTHING I WANT?"

**AUDREY II**

"DON'T TELL ME. YOU GOT TIED UP"

**MR MUSHNIK**

"I THINK I NEED A ROOT CANAL. I DEFINITELY NEED A LONG, SLOW ROOT CANAL"

**ARTHUR DENTON**

"IF YOU FEED ME, SEYMOUR, I CAN GROW UP BIG AND STRONG!"

**AUDREY II**

"IT'S TRUE! I CHOPPED HIM UP! BUT I DIDN'T KILL HIM!"

**SEYMOUR**

"IF YOU WANNA BE PROFOUND, IF YOU REALLY GOTTA JUSTIFY, TAKE A BREATH AND LOOK AROUND, A LOT OF FOLKS DESERVE TO DIE!"

**AUDREY II**

"I'M JUST A MEAN GREEN MOTHER FROM OUTER SPACE AND I'M BAD!"

**AUDREY II**

"I'M GONNA BUST YOUR BALLS!"

**AUDREY II**

"I FIND A LITTLE GIGGLE-GAS BEFORE I BEGIN INCREASES MY PLEASURE ENORMOUSLY"

**ORIN**

"WITH THE RIGHT ADVERTISING THIS COULD BE BIGGER THAN HULA-HOOPS"

**PATRICK MARTIN**

"BETTER OURSELVES! MISTER, WHEN YOU'RE FROM SKID ROW, AIN'T NO SUCH THING!"

**CRYSTAL**

"TOUGH TITTY!"

**AUDREY II**



➤ from behind a blind, it's sinister – sickening even – and sends shivers down our spines. Even if Orin isn't the villain of the film, he's undoubtedly the villain of Audrey's life.

In a turn of events, Orin is the first to be killed. His death was his own fault after the handle of his nitrous oxide tank breaks, but Audrey II still ate him. Does that mean Orin was defeated by Audrey II? Is Audrey II the top villain of the pair of them? So many questions. This villain hierarchy is more complex than we first thought.

Mr Mushnik (Vincent Gardenia) of Mushnik's Flower Shop could be considered a low-key antagonist. He's a villain on the downlow. As Seymour (Rick Moranis) and Audrey's boss, he cares about both to a degree. He's concerned about Audrey's relationship with Orin. He seems proud of Seymour when his plant gets customers interested in the flower shop again. However, he's still greedy, power-hungry and incredibly shallow.

When he finally catches out Seymour in his plant-growing methods, Mushnik seems to stand against wrong-doing (specifically, hacking people up into little pieces). Under the impression that his star employee is a murderer, he confronts Seymour and appears to have every intention of calling the police. But then his mask falls and his motives are revealed: he just wants money. He agrees to let Seymour off the hook, allow him to run away and never come back, but only if he first teaches Mushnik the way of the plant. He wants the money and fame that comes with owning Audrey

II, and he's willing to let a suspected murderer escape to get it. He acts like he's a kind and gentle florist, concerned about his employees' wellbeing and proud of them when they reach their full potential, but really he's just in it for the dollar.

Sure, he's a small business owner, and everything he's worked for will disappear if he can't get that money flowing, but he just saw a dentist get *hacked up and wrapped in paper* like he was a portion of fish and chips. Mr Mushnik doesn't give a shit; Mr Mushnik just wants to be famous and take baths in \$100 bills. Though he's not quite on the same scale as a giant people-eating plant, he represents everything that's bad about the capitalist world we live in. If *Little Shop Of Horrors* was a Disney movie starring an adorable child protagonist and cuddly talking animals, Mushnik would be the baddest mother-fudger, for sure.

Which brings us to Seymour Krelborn. Audrey II is *Little Shop Of Horrors*'s star, but Seymour is its hero. We spend the most time with Seymour, he gets most of the best solos, and Moranis's name is listed first in the credits. Most of the film is from his point of view, so who else could better fit the title of hero? We empathise with him: we're disheartened when Mushnik and Orin lay into him, and we cheer when he finally gets together with Audrey.

But just how much of a hero is he? Heroes don't usually cut up their crushes' boyfriends and feed them to giant, people-eating plants. Seymour may seem like a shy, lovable goof, but he's technically a



*Little Shop Of Horrors'* alternate ending is very grizzly.

Mushnik (Vincent Gardenia) always pushes his staff.



All of Seymour's dreams finally start to come true.



Arthur (Bill Murray) creeps out Orin with his love for dentists.

## POWER PLANTS

The top 5 best plants of the movie world

**MANDRAKE ROOTS**  
HARRY POTTER AND THE CHAMBER OF SECRETS (2002)



1 Plants that look like babies! You mustn't handle them without proper ear protection.

**TRIFFIDS**  
THE DAY OF THE TRIFFIDS (1963)



2 John Wyndham's terrible Triffids were realised on screen in the 1963 movie, and they were pretty terrifying.

**POD PEOPLE**  
INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS (1956)



3 You never know who you can trust when there are Pod People around making copies of you. Stay vigilant.



"SEYMOUR DID IT FOR LOVE. BUT SO DID WALTER WHITE, AT FIRST"

murderer. Sure, he didn't actually kill Orin in the dental surgery, but he had a gun on him. It was pure luck that Orin's gas mask broke just before Seymour pulled the trigger. And don't even think about telling us he was going to flake on killing him; he had so much to gain: fame and fortune, bumping uglies with Audrey I, Orin not being alive anymore – the list goes on. He may have had strong reservations about performing mutilations, but that didn't stop him from trying. You also generally need a strong stomach to be able to saw apart a dead body in your basement. He certainly had no reservations there. If anything, he seemed quite eager. We're on to you, Seymour Krelborn. Your geeky glasses and adorable sleeveless cardigans don't fool us.

Even if you *do* think Seymour would have backed out at the last minute (though why would you? The man is clearly a psychopath), he didn't hesitate for a second when it came to Mr Mushnik. He didn't even think about it; just flat-out backed him into Audrey II's ready and waiting mouth. And for what? Mushnik gave him an out with the offer of letting him disappear. But that wasn't good enough for Seymour Krelborn, oh no. Without Seymour, Audrey II would have



Seymour feels like he's stuck on Skid Row until the total eclipse of the sun.

never been fed and grown large enough at eat people whole. You could argue that his intensions behind feeding Audrey II were good. He did it for love. But, you know... so did Walter White, at first.

"I don't know anyone who deserves to get chopped up and fed to a hungry plant!" he says. Shut your filthy, lying mouth, Seymour. You know of at least two people, that's for sure.



*Little Shop Of Horrors* is out now on DVD and Blu-ray.

## GROOT GUARDIANS OF THE GALAXY (2014)



4 He may be a wooden tree-like being, but he's the most human part of *Guardians*. He'd never make you kill people.

## POISON IVY'S IVY BATMAN AND ROBIN (1997)



5 Poison Ivy was the best thing about the film. The other best thing was her ivy. The other-other best thing were the Bat-nipples.

## YOUR TAKE ON THE CLASSIC

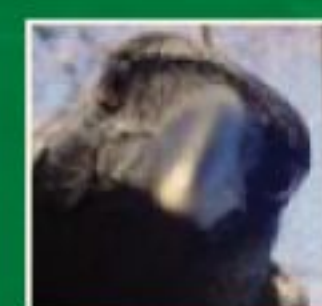
WHAT YOU THOUGHT @SCIFINOW



"I wasn't scared of dentists until watching it..."  
@mrslaurenwayne



"I've seen the original, musical and stage versions. Musical is the best. Great songs! And a mean green mutha from outer space!"  
@thebrainofspock



"My husband introduced me to this. Was singing it for weeks afterwards. Great fun, excellent film."  
@TheCrowLady



"Love the movie and until the recent Blu-ray release the 'bad ending' DVD that got recalled was like my Holy Grail."  
@hardluck\_hotel



"Love it. Have the old and new versions on DVD and seen on stage."  
@cyberpapa



"For some reason I rented the VHS many, many times when I was a kid. It was such crazy and over the top fun."  
@ParsonsFiction



"It's only the best musical ever! You can keep your *Les Miserables* and multicoloured coats. Give me 'Skid Row' or 'Suddenly Seymour!'"  
@KlareRants



"It's one of the most original and unique films I've ever seen"  
@djGriF8

### WATCH FIRST



## THE DARK CRYSTAL (1982)

Frank Oz's directional debut was just as weird, wonderful and puppet-heavy as *Little Shop Of Horrors*.

### WATCH NEXT



## THE RUINS (2008)

A group of friends' holiday goes wrong when they discover an evil plant on an archaeological dig.



ANTHONY PERKINS IN

# PSYCH II

IT'S 22 YEARS LATER,  
AND NORMAN BATES  
IS COMING HOME.





FLASHBACK

# PSYCHO II

TO THE CASUAL CRITIC, PSYCHO II MAY SEEM LIKE YET ANOTHER CASH-IN SEQUEL. HOWEVER, PROBE DEEPER, AND THIS 1983 SHOCKER HAS A SENSITIVELY SOPHISTICATED SCREENPLAY, IMPRESSIVE PERFORMANCES AND TOP-NOTCH DIRECTION. WE SPOKE TO SCRIBE TOM HOLLAND AND CINEMATOGRAPHER DEAN CUNDEY ABOUT THE MAKING OF THE FOLLOW-UP TO ALFRED HITCHCOCK'S SEMINAL HORROR CLASSIC...

WORDS OLIVER PFEIFFER

**Of all the outrageous-in-retrospect creative notions, making a sequel to *Psycho* must have been up there with some of the worst of them. Alfred Hitchcock's undisputed 1960 black-and-white masterpiece broke all the rules of cinema, including infamously killing off its lead actress in the first act. The shocking, curtain-pulling denouement, in which the thought-to-be sweet and innocent protagonist, Norman Bates, is unveiled as the secretly insane cross-dressing perpetrator, didn't exactly scream out for a sequel either.**

"I was terrified! I thought it was insane. We thought the critics would crucify us because we even dared to make a sequel. I was terrified because my career was even more vulnerable at that time," says Tom Holland, who wrote *Psycho II* and would go on to direct such iconic Eighties shockers as *Fright Night* and *Child's Play*.

It certainly helped that the director, the late Richard Franklin, who had helmed the *Psycho*-styled shocker *Patrick* and *Rear Window*-on-wheels thriller *Road Games*, was a Hitchcock aficionado who had met the man himself and was even invited onto the set of the filmmaker's 1969 spy thriller *Topaz*. "He had an encyclopedic knowledge of Hitchcock, and was the first one to invite him down to USC (School of Cinematic Arts)," remembers Holland. "He knew every movie, and working with him was like taking a graduate semester in Hitchcock. We ran every Hitchcock movie we could get our hands on, starting with the silent films. Richard picked out the visual set pieces, and we studied what Hitchcock had cut together."

Getting the story right was absolutely paramount in luring a potentially reluctant star of the original back for the sequel. "The challenge was how was I going to write a script strong enough that would persuade Anthony Perkins to reprise Norman Bates," says Holland. "It had to be acting bait to bring Norman back to create the first serial murder slasher film."

*Psycho II* is set 22 years after the events of the original film, with a now middle-aged and apparently psychologically cured Norman released from a mental institution and desperate to lead a normal life back at his family motel. He gets work at a local diner and befriends young waitress Mary, who moves in with him at the Bates residence. Unfortunately, ghosts of the past threaten to tip him over the edge again, namely vengeful Lila Loomis (formerly Crane), the estranged sister of original shower murder victim Marion Crane, who fiercely protests Norman's release and goes to extreme lengths to destabilise him in an attempt to drive him back to the asylum.

"The script has a beautiful character arc for an actor. What was great about the original was that Norman was the psychopathic murderer that you sympathised with because you knew that his mother had driven him insane," considers Holland. "You felt sorry for him in

the original, and that's what I played off of. The sequel is very strictly based on the given circumstances of the original – I didn't violate anything that Hitchcock created in *Psycho*."

It isn't long before Norman is haunted by memories of his mother and starts receiving demanding memos and troubling phone calls from the dead. Then he sees her peering out from the bedroom window. Little does he know (spoiler alert!) that Mary is in fact the daughter of Lila Loomis, both dressing up and posing as Norman's mother in a cunning bid to slip him back into insanity.

Interestingly, *Psycho II* originally started out as a cable film until Universal realised the value of the property they had. "They didn't have a clue – they wanted to do it with a low-budget cable crew, and we knew there was no way we were going to be able to talk them out of it," continues Holland. "So we sent

**Delicately mimicking the master was of prime concern to Richard Franklin and his collaborators.**

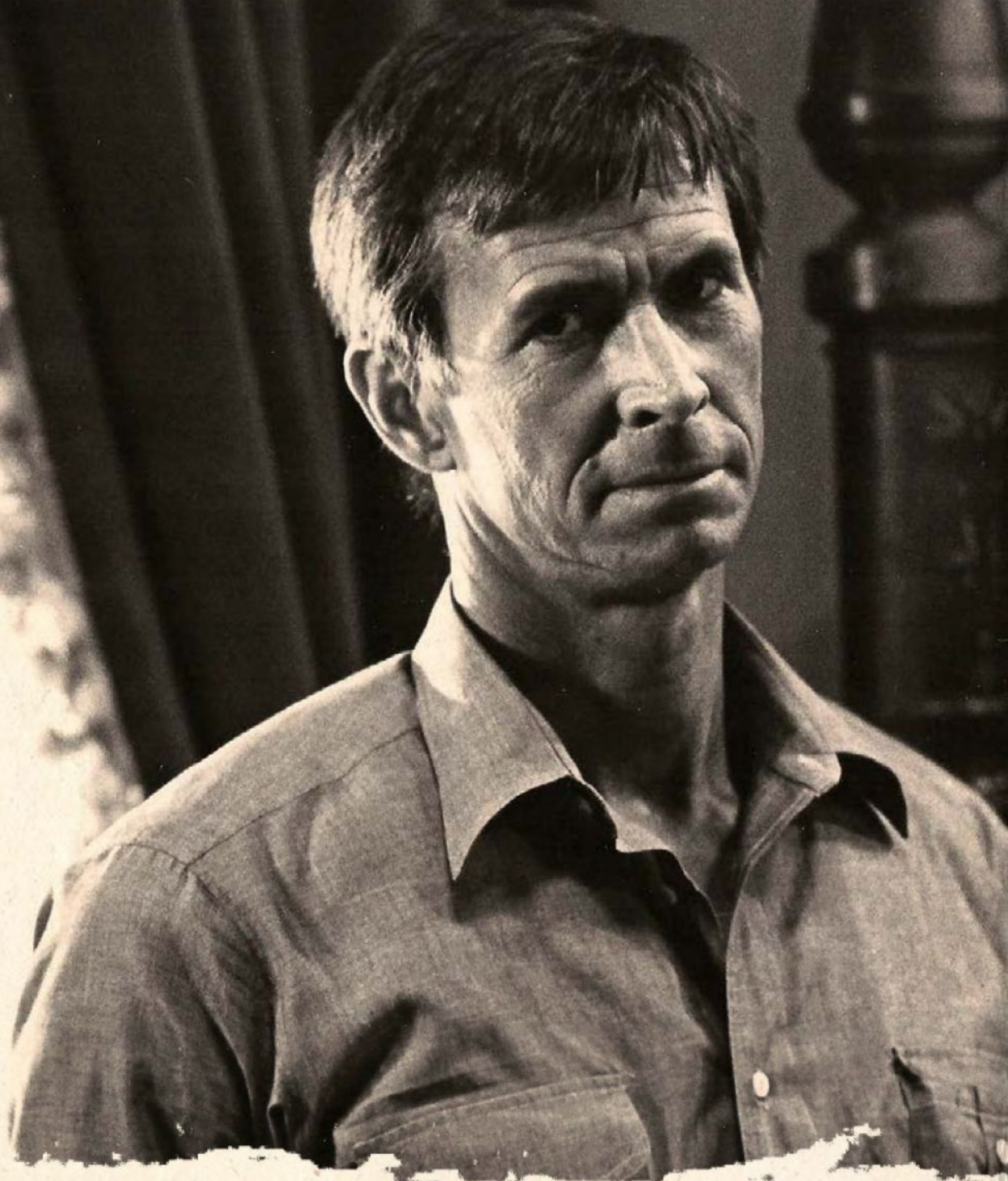


**"RICHARD HAD AN  
ENCYCLOPEDIA  
KNOWLEDGE OF  
HITCHCOCK"**

TOM HOLLAND



**"WE ANALYSED  
THE SHOTS OF  
HITCHCOCK  
AND CARRIED  
THAT THROUGH"**  
DEAN CUNDEY



➤ Tony the script, he said yes, and Universal released a press release stating that Anthony Perkins was going to reprise Norman Bates... then the entire world went nuts! It was only then that Universal said 'Hmm, maybe we have a feature film here.'"



Joining Perkins was a young Meg Tilly in the ambiguous role of potential love interest Mary. *Psycho* veteran Vera Miles reprised her role as Lila Crane, the mother of Mary and sister of ill-fated murder victim Marion (Janet Leigh) from the original. Robert Loggia (once considered for the role of Sam Loomis in the original film) played Norman's jovial psychiatrist, while Dennis Franz embodied a typically crass former Bates motel manager. Another *Psycho* throwback was Hilton A Green, Hitchcock's assistant director on the original, who would serve as an invaluable producer on the sequel.

"Hilton was this great link to the past, and when he came on set you could tell he was reminiscing," remembers cinematographer Dean Cundey, who shot *Psycho II*. "Every now and then he would tell us a little anecdote about making the first one that really gave a lot of frame of reference. We were really honouring the tradition of the first one, and I think he appreciated that."

Indeed, delicately mirroring the original and mimicking the master was of prime concern to Franklin and his collaborators. This meant filming (on an equally low budget) at the exact same Universal backlot that *Psycho* was shot on, with some heavily storyboarded sequences, including a homage-induced shower scene

and some particularly chilling murder sequences – filmed in a similar style to the great master of suspense. "We very carefully analysed the shots, the compositions, the mood and style of Hitchcock, and carried that through," continues Cundey.

Although the iconic Bates residence still stood on the Universal backlot, its interior, along with the Bates Motel, had to be meticulously reconstructed. "They did a great job, because it was certainly very strange to stand in the lobby where the staircase goes up, and you can almost project the fact that you were standing in that same space from the original movie," reflects Cundey.

However, Holland lent his own smartly conceived twist to this particularly taunt tale with the climatic revelation that (spoiler alert) Norman's elderly co-worker at the diner, Mrs Spool, was in fact Norman's real mother, and was behind all the murders in this story.

"I thought it was the greatest twist I ever came up with!" claims Holland. "You knew the bad person was the mother, that she'd driven Norman crazy, so it was coming up [with the idea that] the original corpse wasn't the real mother; it was the sister."

In a darkly comical punchline that no doubt would have tickled the great master of suspense, Norman ends up knocking out his real mother dead with a shovel, and consequently repositions her corpse in the bedroom window, leading to a chilling closing shot that echoes the original twisted family unit. "I thought the shovel to the head was brilliant, and I was on the floor laughing," reveals Holland. "I knew Richard would go for it, as he had a twisted, very eccentric sense of humour as well, and when I suggested it to him he fell

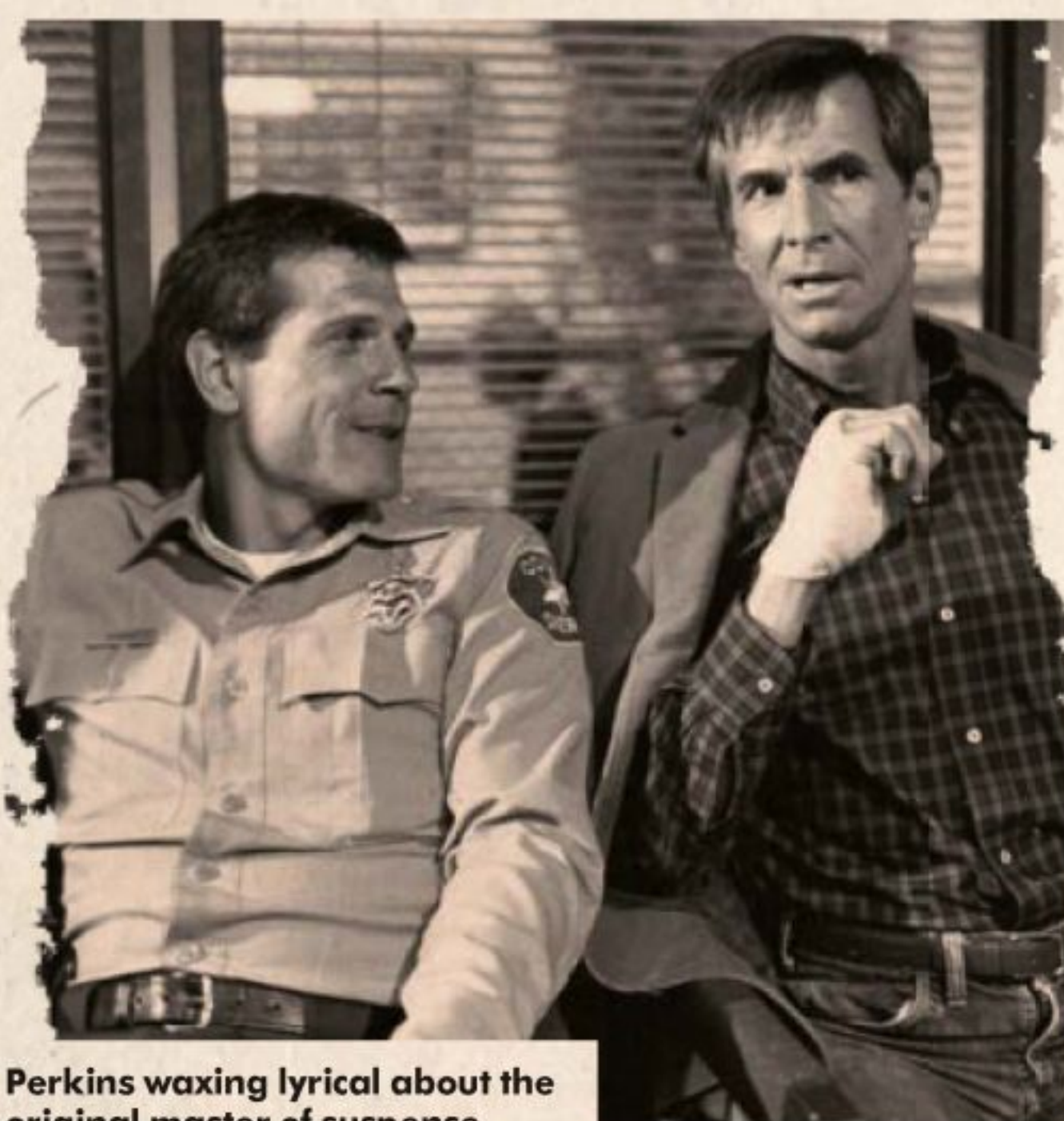


**Mother gets her point across in the nicest of ways!**



***Psycho II* scribe Tom Holland also played the part of Deputy Norris.**





Perkins waxing lyrical about the original master of suspense.



Mother's not looking quite herself today.

Meg Tilly about to tuck into one tasty toasted cheese sandwich!



on the floor laughing too! Norman killing his mother was the right ending for that movie."

*Psycho II* became a major financial success for Universal when it was released on 3 June 1983. It went on to spawn two inferior sequels – the first of which, *Psycho III*, was directed by Perkins himself – and despite being released in 1986, took place a mere month after the events of its predecessor. It concerned a suicidal nun whose similarity to Marion triggers homicidal memories for Norman. The made-for-cable *Psycho IV: The Beginning* (1990) delved into the origins of our troubled antihero, played by a teenage Henry Thomas in flashback, with Perkins once again reprising the character in present day. But neither film has acquired the reputation of Franklin's first sequel.

"*Psycho II* has been growing in critical estimation over the years," considers Holland. "I went to a Black List dinner where some of today's best horror filmmakers attended, and they said that *Psycho II* was the best horror sequel ever made! I almost fell off my chair, because I thought it had been forgotten. The film's reputation continues to grow, because Norman's character had an arc to it – he starts out as someone who is desperately trying to hold onto his sanity, and he ends up as mad as a hatter!"

Opening with a slightly edited replay of the shower scene from the original, with numerous twists and turns along the way to keep the audience guessing and a hauntingly subdued, mournful score from Jerry Goldsmith, *Psycho II* is a respectful sequel that resists cheap, corny throwbacks to its predecessor (it contains clever ones, like a neat Hitchcock silhouette in Mother's bedroom for instance).

Instead, this chilling shocker is a refreshing second chapter, with a very witty narrative that ironically suggests that Norman is perhaps the sanest character in the story – it is only others that attempt to torment him in a bid to bring that psychotic character back.

Unsurprisingly, Holland looks back on *Psycho II* with great fondness. "It was one of those cases where the writing was really in sync with the director," he reflects happily. "There was a great agreement between Richard and myself, so what I wrote is what was filmed, and it was a terrifically satisfying experience. Richard Franklin directed a brilliant film, and I believe it's the best film he ever did."



*Psycho II* is available to buy now as part of the *Psycho Collection: I-IV* box set, distributed by Universal.



London with Hitchcock's AD Hilton Green, who worked as a producer on the sequel.

## CUTTING THE SEQUEL

### A CONVERSATION WITH PSYCHO II EDITOR AND SOUND DESIGNER ANDREW LONDON

**It was *Jaws* editor Verna Fields who helped land you the job of editing *Psycho II*, wasn't it?**

Yes, we had a nice discussion, at the end of which she said to me, "Well, I think the director should have the editor he wants, and I think sound editors make the best editors." She was a sound editor herself, and I had her to thank for me breaking through and getting that.

**Richard Franklin wanted to emulate Hitchcock's style. Tell us about how you achieved this.**

The most emulative sequence was literally one we didn't discuss, which is when Norman is painting the motel, sees what he thinks is his mother at the window, and goes up the stairs and into her bedroom. Richard hadn't said what his plans were for that, but I got all this footage, and something about it kept ringing a bell. I couldn't figure what the continuity was until I realised I'd seen it before in *Psycho*. I ran it down to where Norman comes into his mother's bedroom in that film, and it was a shot-for-shot emulation of that sequence. I literally put the film in the synchroniser and measured every cut from the original, and it matched the cut points. There was only one slight camera move-in that was a little different.

**What about the brutal Lila Loomis murder, which is similarly edited like her near-death during the climax of *Psycho*...**

It was a difficult thing for me to cut, because we were so low-budget – I never believed anybody would buy the dummy that we got for the knife-in-the-mouth! But when it screened people just disappeared under their seats! The fact that they were staring at a dummy in a couple of shots and then we cut to Vera Miles... you suffer through things like that [when you edit] because you're convinced that it'll be laughed off the screen! But when emotions are going people just go with it.

**What was it like working with composer Jerry Goldsmith?**

We coordinated closely because Jerry did the musical sound of the knife and we did a metallic sound effect. When Meg Tilly opens the drawer Jerry did that slicing sound. He and I ended up doing three or four films together. He was so nice to me even though I was just starting out. When we were scoring it he told me he went back and forth on my cuts and said, "You're so good, I want to bring you on my next movie!"





# THE SCIFINOW MARS ATTACKS! QUIZ

DO YOU REMEMBER ANYTHING ABOUT ONE OF TIM BURTON'S  
MOST OVERLOOKED FILMS? FIND OUT WITH OUR  
MARS ATTACKS! QUIZ...

## UNDER ATTACK

1. Who plays Richie's army private brother, Billy-Glenn?
2. Where does the Norris family live?
3. Where is Art Land giving a presentation when the Martians attack Las Vegas?
4. What is Jerry Ross's occupation in the White House?
5. What kind of band plays the US National Anthem outside the White House's ruins at the end of the film?

## IT'S IN THE DETAILS

6. What is the name of the GNN news reporter played by Michael J Fox?

7. Which character gets shrunk and stepped on by a Martian?
8. What breed is Nathalie Lake's pet dog Poppy?
9. Who greets the Martians when they first land on Earth?
10. What does Richie do for a living?

## LOVE AND WAR

11. Which of Jerry's extremities does the Martian disguised as a prostitute bite off before killing him?
12. What kind of medals are Richie and Florence awarded in the aftermath of the attacks?
13. Who is the only surviving member of the

government by the end of the film?

14. Which song makes the Martians' heads explode when they hear it?

15. What was the one thing the Martians told the American public when they landed?

## MARS IN REAL LIFE

16. What year was the film first released?
17. How many characters does Jack Nicholson play?
18. Which Welsh singer makes an appearance as himself?
19. Which James Bond actor plays Dr Kressler?
20. Who composed the film's score?

**DIDN'T HE/SHE DO WELL!** See how you did with our arbitrary scoring system



16-20

### RICHIE NORRIS

Wow! You survived to the end! And not only that, you managed to save some other people too, and even receive special recognition from the President's daughter. Good on you.

11-15

### TAFFY DALE

You survived to the end, but your family and entire staff were killed by Martians. That's probably not how you thought your day would go, but there's nothing to be done about it now.

6-10

### JERRY ROSS

Stop thinking with the brain in your slacks, and start thinking with the brain in your skull. You think you're hot shit, but evidence shows you can't even fill out a simple quiz.

0-5

### GENERAL CASEY

You are one of the first to go. How embarrassing. A high military ranking is only any use to you if you're still alive. That's really too bad. Better luck next time, eh?

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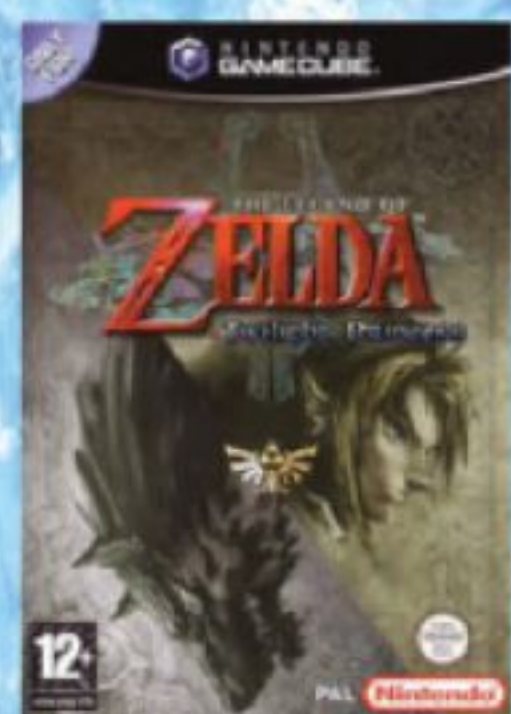
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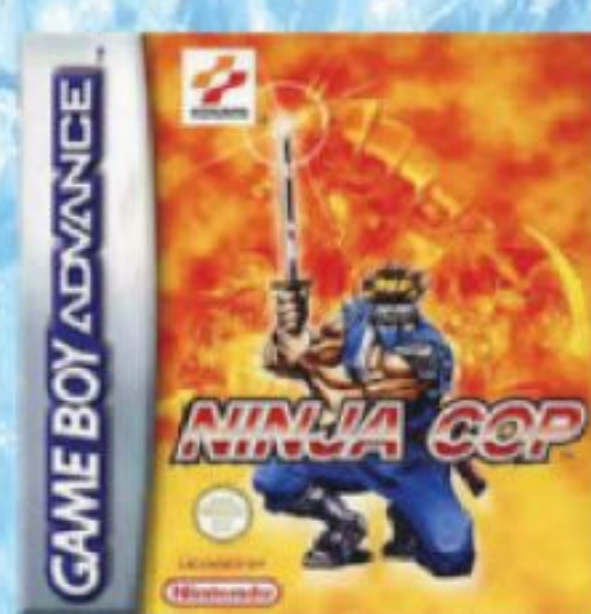
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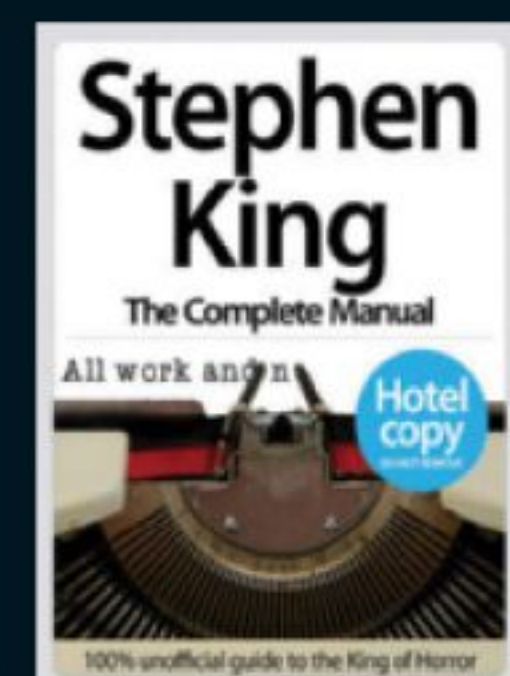
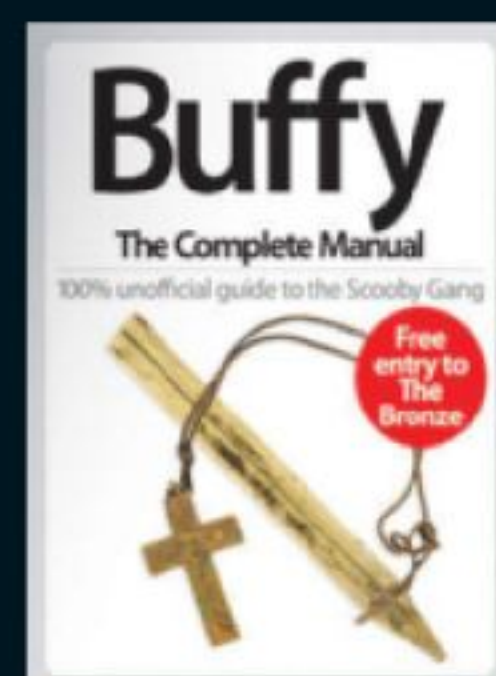
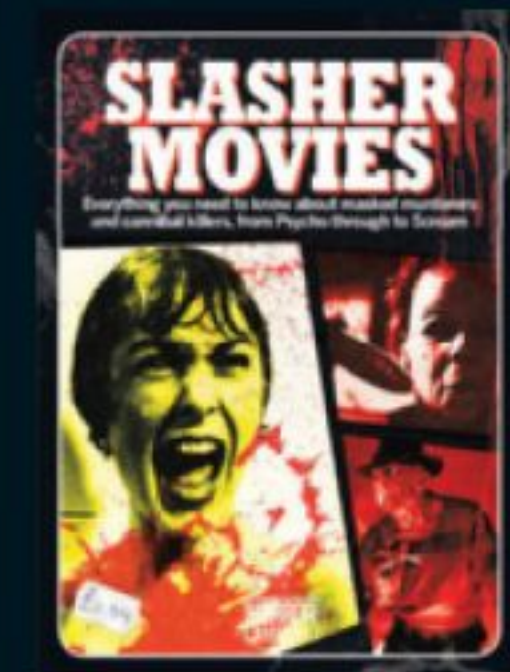
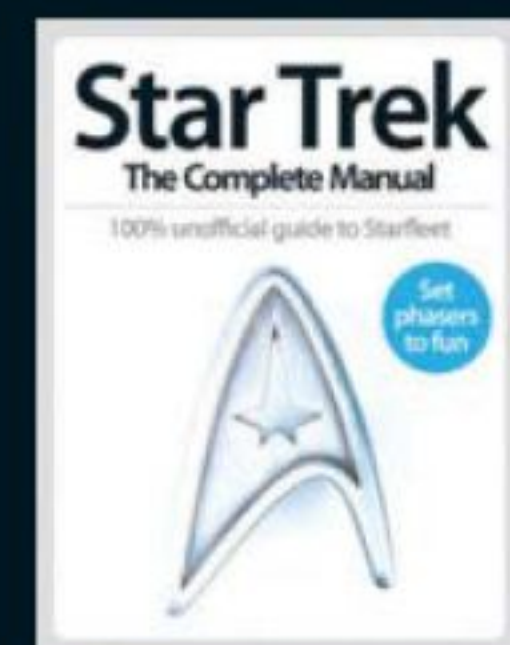
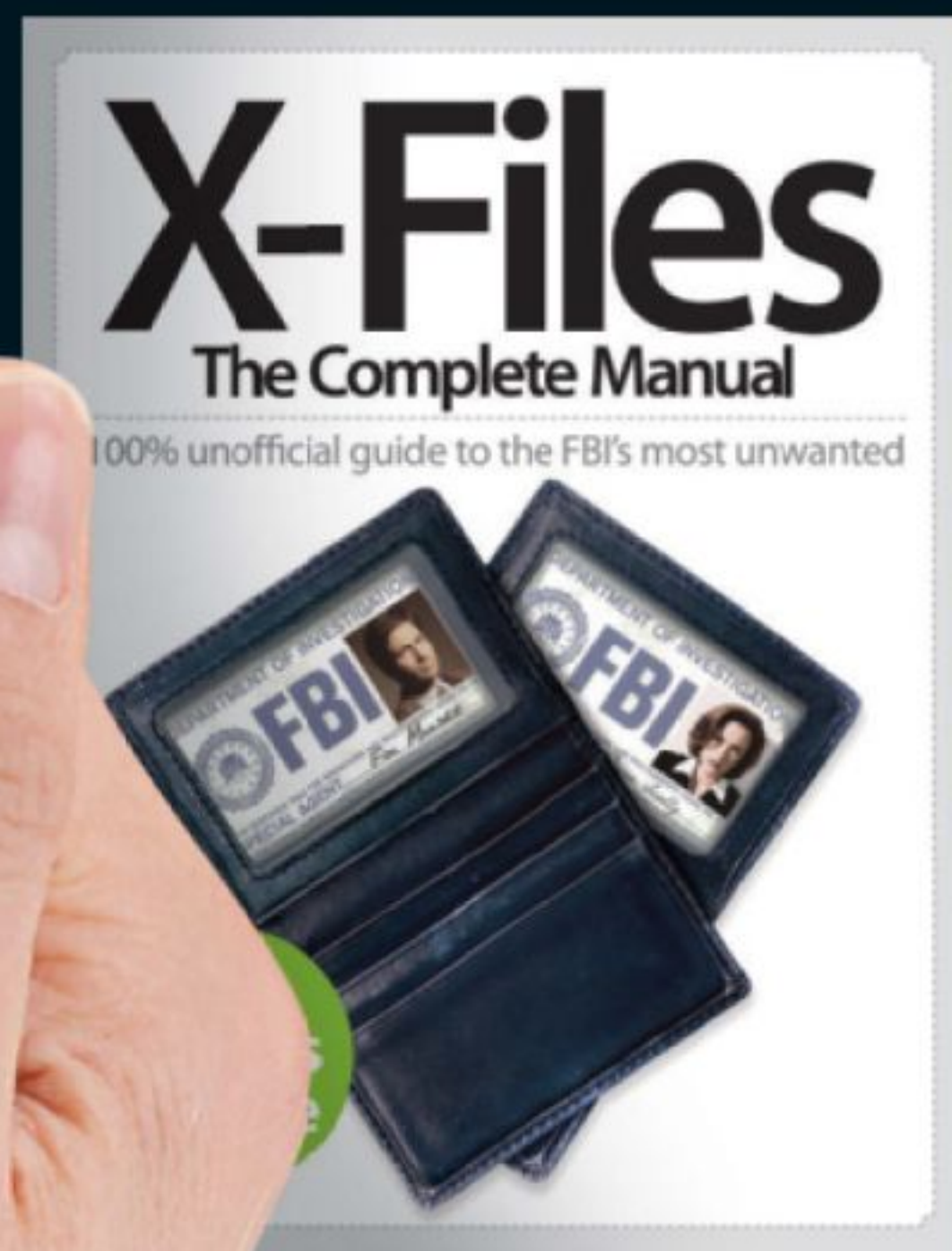
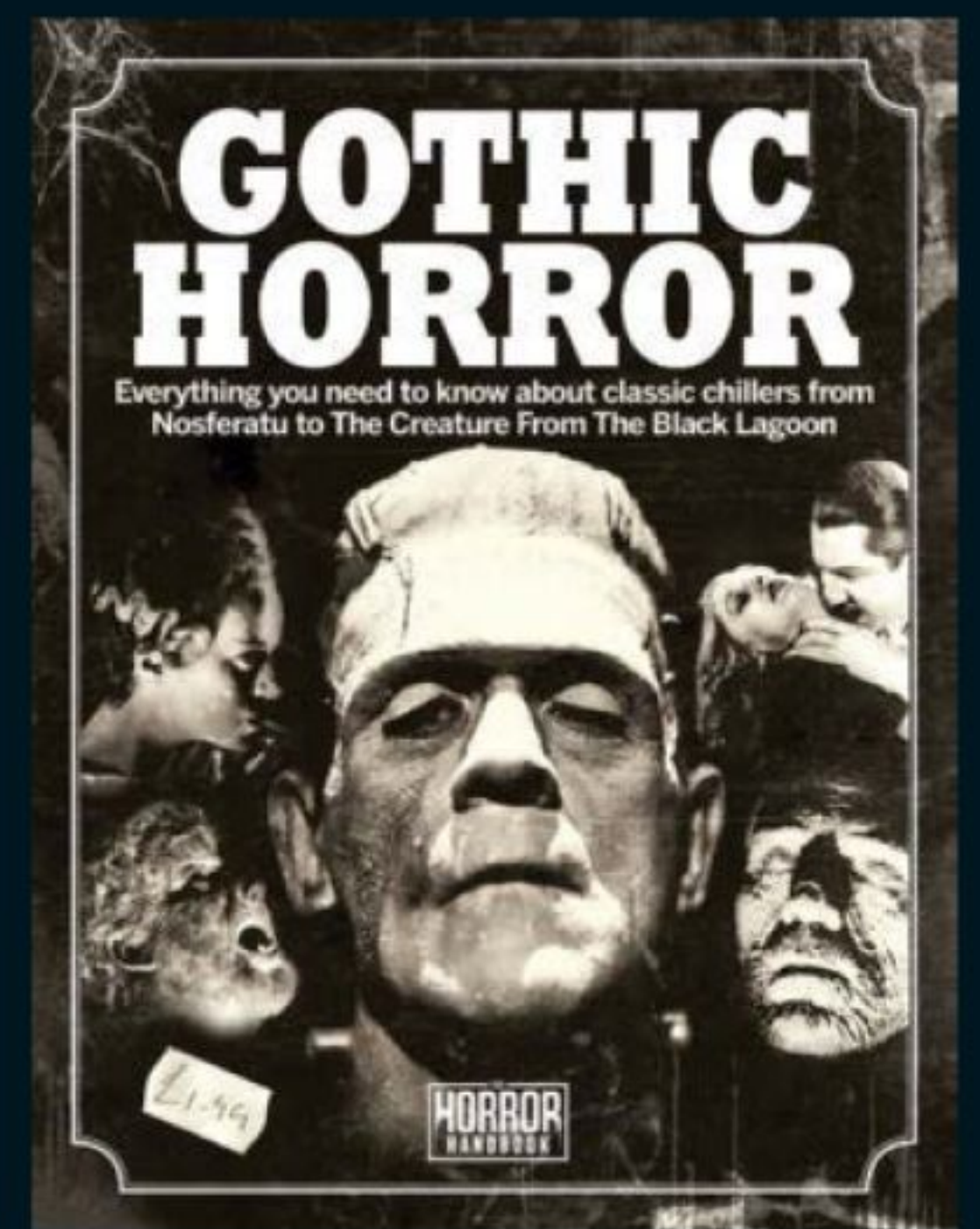
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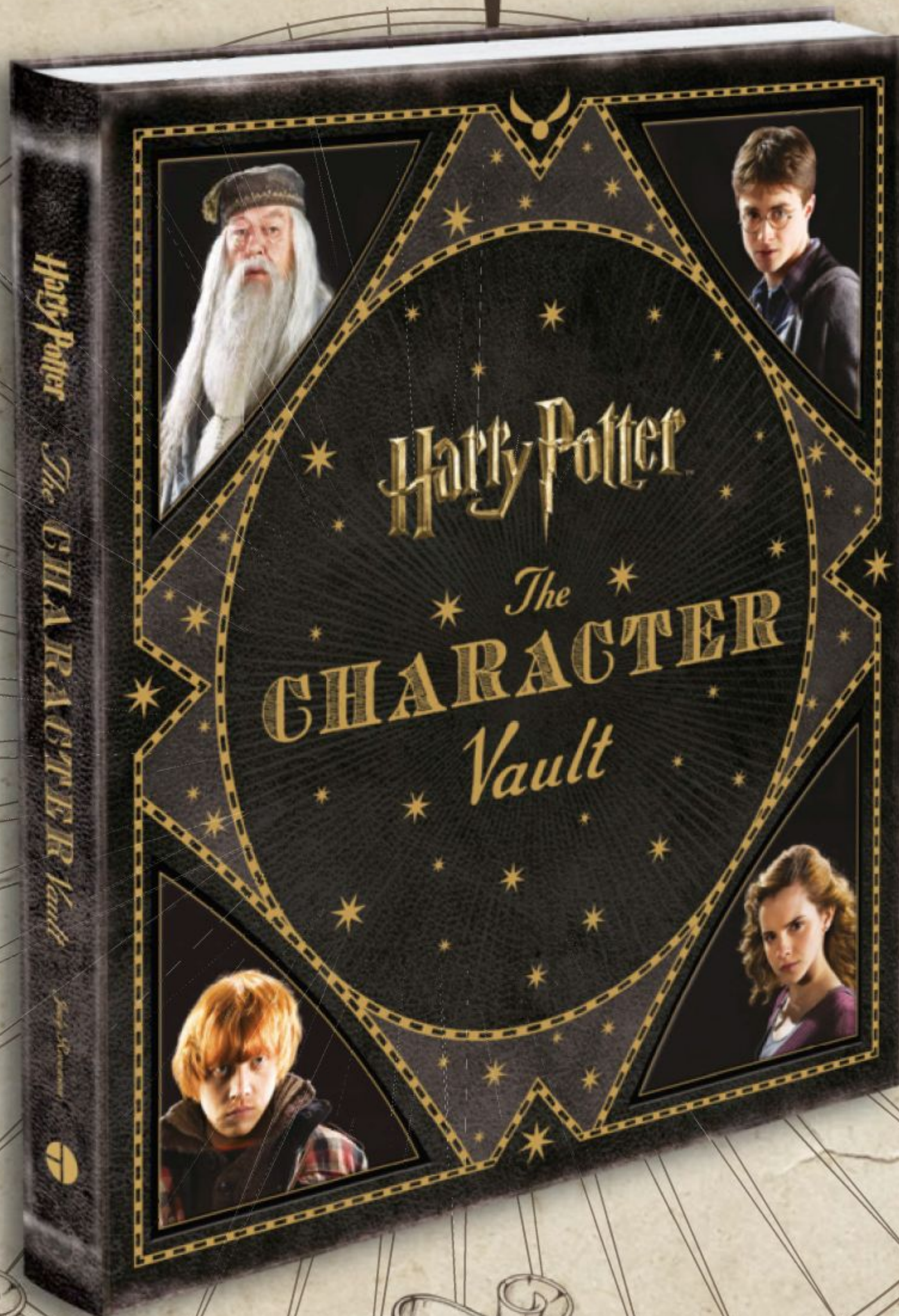
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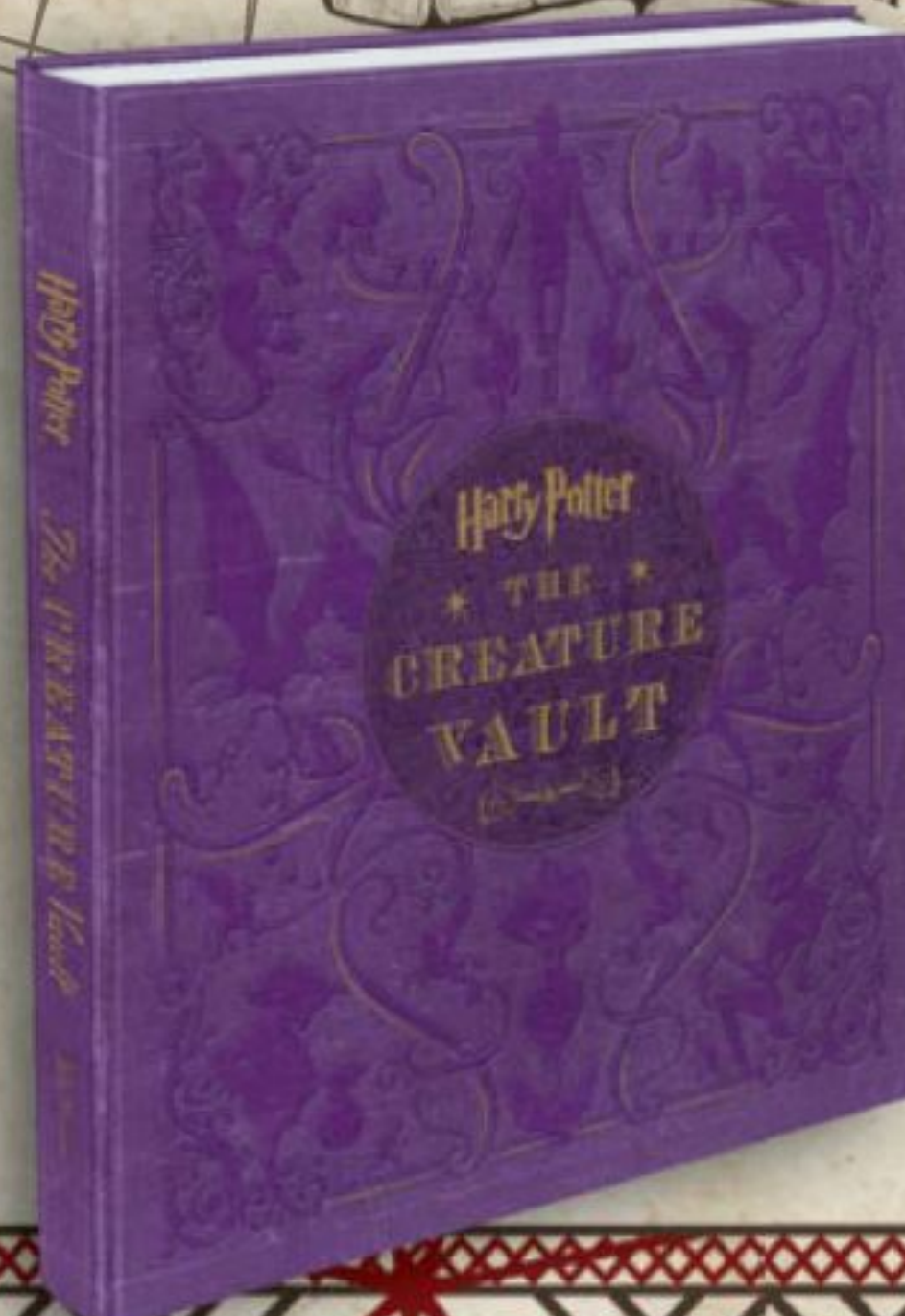
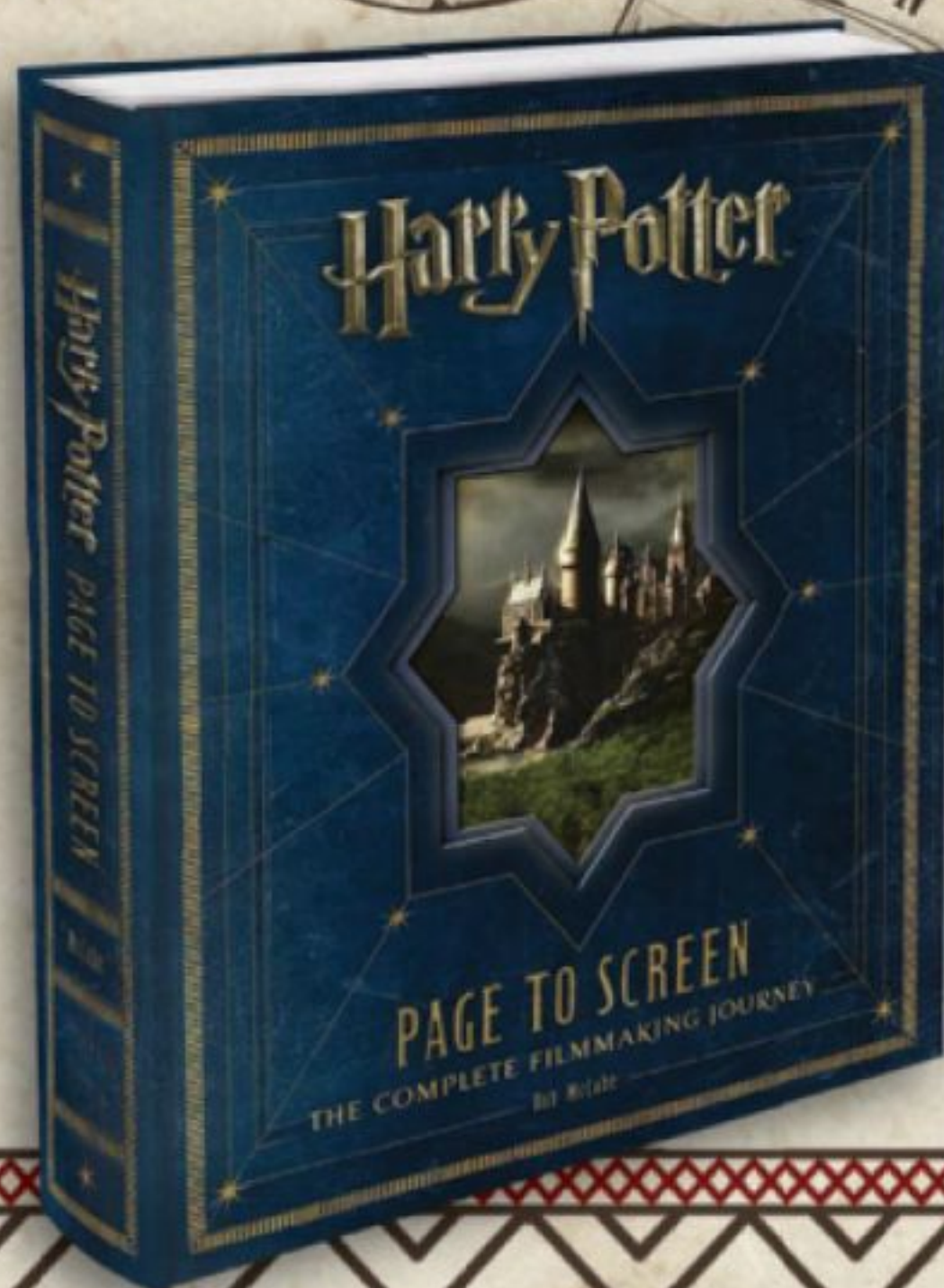
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